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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

TWENTY WEST FORTIETH STREET • NEW YORK, N. Y. 10018 • BRyant 9-1400

June 12, 1964

The Honorable Everett McKinley Dirksen
Senate Office Building
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator Dirksen:

When the historic voting of cloture on the civil rights bill on June 10, 1964, is seen in perspective, away from the heat of the contest of the long Spring, your key work will receive the credit it deserves.

Let me be the first to admit that I was in error in estimating your preliminary announcements and moves. From my position, I must still regard any genuine palliation of the traditional Southern reliance on sacredness of state action in Negro civil rights matters as an untenable move. The Southerners have been too hard too long and have perpetrated too many crimes under the cloak of independent state action for me or anyone in my position to be expected to approve any move which seems to preserve this cruel camouflage.

(Even as I write this their leaders in the Senate are demonstrating through the offering of tricky or sleazy or brazen amendments their determination to go down, stony-faced and unrelenting, with their theory of domination based solely and baldly upon color.)

But there were certain realities which had to be taken into account in advancing this legislation to a vote. Out of your long experience you devised an approach which seemed to you to offer a chance for success. The resounding vote of 71-29 June 10 to shut off debate tended mightily to reinforce your judgment and to vindicate your procedure.

It is significant that 27 of the 33 Republican Senators voted for cloture, the first time it has ever been imposed on a civil rights bill debate. Despite the vote of Senator

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Goldwater against cloture and a similar vote by five other Republicans, the better than 4-to-1 vote by Republican Senators certainly indicates clearly the feeling of the party that debate had proceeded long enough and that the Senate should be permitted to vote on the bill.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People sends its thanks to you for your vote for cloture and for your final speech before the vote on Wednesday which cited the war service of millions of American Negro citizens. These have, indeed, fought and died to preserve or to advance democracy abroad. They have waited too patiently and been humiliated too long in their own country. As you so well noted, the time of an idea has come.

As the vote on the amendments proceeds, we shall undoubtedly express some reservations and work for alteration of some of the proposals on procedure which seem to us to make undue obeisance to state action and to prolong unnecessarily the relief sought under certain titles of the bill. These, however, are differences of opinion on how to reach a goal, not on the goal itself.

With the passage of the bill, with or without your amendments intact, the cause of human rights and the commitment of a great, democratic government to protect the guarantees embodied in its constitution will have taken a giant step forward. Your leadership of the Republican party in the Senate at this turning point will become a significant part of the history of this century.

Very sincerely yours,,



Roy Wilkins

Executive Secretary

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