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Allen-Scott Report

Civil Rights Smoke Screen

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Mr. Allen

The historic Senate struggle over the sweeping civil rights bill is taking a singular turn.

Whether by deliberate design or fortuitous coincidence, the protracted battle over civil rights is providing a very effective smoke-screen for a wily plan to slip President Johnson's controversial \$3.4 billion foreign program through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in piecemeal form.

The first effort to do that was stopped dead in its tracks. But the last has been heard of this backstage scheme. It's still very much alive and kicking. There are significant indications it has high-level administration backing.

Two other dramatic aspects of this eventful foreign aid fray are:

The rival leaders are Senators J. William Fulbright, D. Ark., die-hard foe of civil rights legislation who is going to exceptional lengths to win approval of the President's multi-billion dollar foreign aid proposal, and Wayne Morse, D. Ore., veteran champion of civil rights who is militantly demanding drastic pruning of large scale foreign aid spending, particularly military.

To "grease the skids" to ease the President's huge foreign aid authorization bill through the Foreign Relations Committee with a minimum of opposition and public attention, Fulbright has resorted to be ingenious strategem of splitting that legislation into eight separate measures (S.2659 to S.2666) covering the major provisions (titles) of the President's bill.

Fulbright's justification for this artful maneuver is that there is little or no opposition to some of these provisions and, therefore, they should be acted upon separately. Otherwise, he contends, an across-the-board slash of the foreign aid budget as Congress has voted the last several years, would adversely affect these generally approved titles.

The opposition emphatically disputes this, holding that foreign aid must be considered as a whole to prevent Congress from being lulled into voting piecemeal appropriations that in the end amount to what was originally contemplated.

Senator Fulbright's first move to slip several of his piecemeal bills through the Foreign Relations Committee occurred at an unpublicized closed-door meeting last week.

Only a few committeemen were present; Fulbright had a number of proxies in his pocket, and the stage appeared all set for his pulling off a neat coup.

But one of the few committeemen present was Senator Morse, and he balked.

With characteristic bluntness, the scrappy Oregonian not only derailed Fulbright's plan, but served notice he was going to do his utmost to block the whole piecemeal strategem.

When Fulbright suavely proposed voting on two of the least controversial piecemeal measures, indicating he had enough proxies for a majority, Morse instantly called a halt by quietly announcing, "Mr. Chairman, there will be no vote on these bills this morning."

"This executive session was called for that purpose," replied Fulbright. "All members of the committee have been polled, and the clerk has their proxies. Everything is proper and in order."

"I am quite sure of that," said Morse, "but that's not my point. My point is that as a member of this committee, I insist on further consideration of these bills. For one thing, I want to hear Secretary Rusk. I want him to come before this committee and discuss the whole question of foreign aid in full detail."

"Secretary Rusk has been here," contended Fulbright.

"But not while I was present," retorted Morse. "He wasn't here when I was on hand, and there are many things I want to ask him about. I have many questions, Mr. Chairman, a great many questions that will take hours to consider and discuss. Before there is any voting on the foreign aid issue, I must insist that Secretary Rusk and other important witnesses be summoned for full consideration of what we are voting on."

And that ended that. With the Senate about to begin the daily debate on civil rights, Fulbright had no alternative but to bow to Morse. Fulbright had the proxies, but Morse had the rules in his favor and he won the round.

It was a TKO, but it stopped Fulbright.

Outwardly, the White House has no direct connection with Fulbright's ingenious strategem of splitting the President's \$3.4 billion foreign aid program into eight separate bills. But significantly Foreign Aid Director David Bell is in close touch with Fulbright and confers frequently with him. Also, Bell is known to strongly favor Fulbright's plan. . . . Almost two-thirds of the \$2.5 billion in economic foreign aid Congress voted for the current fiscal year, ending July 1, is still unspent and unobligated.