

Negro Leaders Skeptical About Nixon

By Drew Pearson
and Jack Anderson

Probably the most important and immediate problem Richard Nixon will face after Jan. 20 will be the issue that he talked a great deal about during the campaign — crime in the streets; and with it, race relations.

The problem has become more difficult because more than 80 per cent of the Negro vote went against Nixon, and the first Negro to be elected to the Senate in 100 years, Sen. Edward Brooke, (R-Mass.), has now declined to serve in his Cabinet.

Brooke's declination was based largely on the fact that he did not want to surrender a position of power and prestige in the United States Senate. However, events preceding Brooke's veto of a Cabinet position illustrate the general skepticism of Negro moderates regarding the policies of the new President.

Brooke himself was personally alarmed when, last October, Nixon delivered a speech in North Carolina stating that, while he would back the Supreme Court's 1954 desegregation decision, he would leave the methods of enforcement up to local communities. Federal funds, he indicated, would not be used as a weapon to enforce integration.

This is exactly what South-

ern communities have argued for and what Negro leaders have argued against. Negroes claim that local white opposition to desegregation has held back anything but token integration in large parts of the South. They point out that 14 years have passed since the Supreme Court's historic decision and there is still no real desegregation in the South.

Brooke was in Boston at the time Nixon delivered his North Carolina speech, but he immediately sought an interview with the candidate and conveyed the view of Negro leaders.

Nixon replied that he had been misquoted.

Brook did not question this, and remained loyal to the Republican candidate throughout the campaign. However, he was the only prominent Negro who did. Whitney Young, head of the Urban League, even remarked that any Negro who didn't know which candidate to vote for "deserved slavery." Most of them did. The Negro vote went 89 per cent to Hubert Humphrey.

Brooke Wavers

Despite his official loyalty, however, Brooke has confided to close friends that he has been worried about Nixon's position on integration, and the very important part that Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.), the leading Senate segregationist, is slated to play in

picking Supreme Court justices and Federal judges for the South.

This has now been punctuated by the appointment of Thurmond's assistant, Harry Dent, to serve on the new White House staff. Furthermore, Nixon's statement to Brooke that he was misquoted in North Carolina does not seem to hold water. For Nixon made almost the same pledge to Southern delegates in Miami Beach at the GOP convention.

This meeting to seek Southern support was behind closed doors. However, the Miami Herald had a tape recorder inside the room and published a verbatim text of what Nixon said. His most important promise to the Southern delegates was exactly what Negroes, including Brooke objected to most—namely, an attack on the Federal courts for their enforcement of school desegregation.

Here is what Nixon said:

"I think it's the job of the courts to interpret the law and not to make the law . . . I don't think there is any court in this country, any judge in this country, either local or on the Supreme Court that is qualified to be a local school district and to make the decision as your local school board.

"That is why," Nixon continued, "instead of talking about billions more for Federal jobs

and Federal housing, Federal laws . . . I am talking about building bridges to human dignity . . . rather than to try to satisfy some professional civil rights group or something like that, that we will bus the child from one side of the county over to the other."

Nixon also spoke at the hush-hush Southern delegates meeting on the question of open housing.

"Open housing," he said, ". . . my position is the same as Congressman Jerry Ford's . . . it ought to be handled at the state level rather than the Federal level."

It was Rep. Jerry Ford, Republican House Leader, who blocked the open housing bill all last spring at a time when President Johnson and Democratic leaders were trying to pry the bill out of the House Rules Committee where Chairman William Colmer, the Mississippi Dixiecrat, had it firmly stymied.

These are some of the reasons why the one Negro in the U.S. Senate, even though a Republican, decided to turn down the very flattering offer of a post in the Nixon Cabinet.

What's My Line?

John Daly, debonair former master of ceremonies for "What's My Line?" is angling to be head of the U.S. Information Agency under Nixon. He's been pulling wires with the GOP hierarchy in New York.