

Thurmond Stirs Nixon-Finch Huddle

By Drew Pearson
and Jack Anderson

President Nixon called Bob Finch, the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, to the White House the other day to discuss what to do about Sen. Strom Thurmond.

The austere Senator from South Carolina, who stands on his head and does daily push-ups to keep fit, is credited with holding the South in line for Nixon at the Republican convention last year.

He brought Nixon behind closed doors to talk to Southern delegates. While Thurmond beamed paternally, Nixon promised the Southerners that he would let local districts set the guidelines for school desegregation. This was exactly what Southerners wanted to hear, but was contrary to the law passed by Congress. The enterprising Miami Herald planted a tape recorder on a delegate and got a full transcript of Nixon's closed-door pitch.

Throughout the presidential campaign, Thurmond repeated this promise up and down the South. Wait until Nixon reaches the White House, he promised his Southern satrapy. The old order will be restored.

Secretary Finch, however, took office with no intention of ignoring the civil rights law which requires Federal funds to be withheld from school districts that don't desegre-

gate. His first move was to ask Ruby Martin, a brilliant, 35-year-old Negro lawyer, to remain in charge of the civil rights program.

Finch even went to his predecessor, Wilbur Cohen, for advice on how he could persuade Mrs. Martin to stay. Cohen suggested that he offer her a promotion and a more prestigious position. Finch went to her with the offer, which she turned down to go into private practice.

He scarcely got settled behind his new desk at HEW, however, before Thurmond demanded that Nixon keep the secret promise he had made to Southern delegates in Miami and leave it up to the districts to decide what to do about desegregation in five school districts in Mississippi, North and South Carolina. Strom is so unyielding on this subject that he cast the only Senate vote against the confirmation of Cohen as HEW Secretary in 1967 because of Cohen's stand on desegregation.

Willful Senator

The Senator is a headstrong old mossback who is accustomed to getting his way. When he wanted the trees cut down in front of the apartment house which he and Hubert Humphrey occupy near the Potomac, Humphrey, then Vice President, didn't want them cut down. They were cut down anyway.

When Sen. Ralph Yarborough tried to steer Strom into a Senate hearing he didn't

want to attend, the Senator from South Carolina wrestled the Senator from Texas in the corridor outside the hearing room and Yarborough ended up on the floor.

Again, old Strom asserted his stubborn will on a Congressional air trip abroad. There were only two bunks on the plane for the several Senators, Congressmen and their wives. Thurmond and his late wife, the latter a bit embarrassed, climbed into one bunk, while other Senators were still chatting, and proceeded to pray and read the Bible quite audibly, as if to invoke divine sanction upon his expropriation of half the bed space aboard the plane.

So it is no small matter to go against Strom Thurmond. Nevertheless, Secretary Finch insisted to President Nixon that the desegregation laws would have to be enforced. In the end, Thurmond got a 60-day further period of grace for the five school districts. Considering the fact that these schools have been warned, given hearings, visited, warned again and given months of extra time, and considering the fact that it has been more than 14 years since the Supreme Court decreed that they should desegregate with all deliberate speed, this was quite a concession.

During the White House huddle, Finch also agreed that he would do his utmost to persuade some 200 other noncomplying school districts to de-

segregate. He might be able to talk a third, perhaps even half, of them into going along with the law, Finch said.

Stock Speculation

The Securities and Exchange Commissioners have discussed behind closed doors how to stop the stock speculation that is swamping brokers with paperwork and threatening to bring the stock market tumbling down in the biggest crash since 1929.

They agree that the brokers need more, not less, regulating, despite President Nixon's promise in a campaign letter to stockbrokers before his election to give them less. The Commissioners want legislation giving them more power to curb companies that seem to be in business more to promote their stock than to produce goods.

The SEC Commissioners are particularly concerned about the new stock issues that have been run up far beyond their value. One proposal, that would end a lot of stock manipulating and slash the paperwork, is a 100 per cent tax on all stock sold before 60 days.

Under this proposal, a person who purchased stock could get his money back if he needed capital. But he couldn't collect a penny of profit until he had held the stock at least 60 days. All profits for the first 60 days would be taxed 100 per cent.

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