

# Rights Leaders Cool to New Bill

By Drew Pearson  
and Jack Anderson

The Justice Department gave a curtain raiser on President Johnson's new civil rights bill to a closed session of civil rights leaders last week. Their reaction was sour.

Members of the "Leadership Conference," consisting of representatives of the NAACP, AFL-CIO, CORE, The Urban League, The National Council of Churches and others, met in the office of Ramsay Clark, Deputy Attorney General, where he read them the main provisions of the proposed law.

Chief opposition came to the proposed new system of selecting Southern juries which in the past have acquitted white defendants accused of murdering civil rights leaders to the point that the Justice Department has recognized the impracticability of getting a conviction in this type of case in the South.

The new law proposed by the Justice Department would require juries to be selected from registered voters. This brought an immediate objection from the civil rights leaders that it was identical with the Mississippi law passed in 1890 requiring that juries be picked from voters, after which Mississippi prevented Negroes from voting.

Countering civil rights objections, Clark explained that

he had considered the idea of selecting jury panels from citizens above the age of 21, but it was too expensive.

He further remarked that there was something important about having people serve on juries who had enough interest to get down and register to vote.

William Higgs of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party remarked that it was not easy for a cotton picker to leave a plantation, thereby risking his job, and go down to the courthouse to register with sheriffs like Lawrence Rainey of Philadelphia, Miss., indicted in the murder of three civil rights workers, standing around.

## Drastic Housing Clause

Civil rights leaders also noted that there was nothing in the new legislation to provide for the removal of civil rights cases from state to Federal courts; that the bill contained nothing to provide for the removal of law enforcement officers who had maimed or killed civil rights workers.

Finally they objected to the fact that there was nothing in the bill to provide for an indemnification board to pay the widows and families of murdered victims.

On the other hand, the bill contained such strong housing provisions for integration that civil rights leaders ob-

jected. They predicted that this would arouse opposition from the real estate lobby and jeopardize the entire civil rights bill.

"Once Congress knocked out this provision," protested Higgs, "it would be a blank check to every state in the union to cite the action of Congress for defeating state housing laws for desegregation."

Clark remarked that there might be some truth in their contention. When civil rights leaders asked him why, instead of passing a law, the President didn't go ahead with an executive order to enforce housing integration in those types of housing where he had authority, Clark gave a flat no. "He does not intend to do that," said the Deputy Attorney General.

## Rusk Prediction

In a private White House report to 150 of the Nation's top businessmen, Secretary of State Rusk predicted the other evening that the downfall of Presidents Sukarno in Indonesia, Nkrumah in Ghana, and Ben Bella in Algeria would be followed shortly by the overthrow of still other left-wing world leaders.

Rusk started to name them, then hesitated and ended his prediction with an enigmatic smile.

Rusk made his off-the-record remarks at a private White House dinner called by

President Johnson and attended by Vice President Humphrey, the entire Cabinet and business leaders from all over the Nation.

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara gave an optimistic briefing on the Vietnam war. With a pointer in hand, he showed on a map how the Communist design to take over South Vietnam had been thwarted. He said the Hanoi government now realizes it cannot extend its rule over all of Vietnam and is reassessing its position.

## Cut Back or Tax

Chief discussion of the evening was regarding economic problems and President Johnson took up most of the time. He asked for a show of hands by business leaders who would approve a tax increase. Not a single hand up.

But the President warned that he wouldn't let the election or anything else stand in the way of what he thought was "best for the country." He suggested that the businessmen could avoid a tax increase if they would hold down capital spending.

One businessman asked how much the President thought they should cut back.

Finally McNamara spoke up and urged a 10 per cent cut-back. This should release enough copper, steel, and other scarce materials to keep prices from going up, he said.