

Backstage Battle in House Panel

By Drew Pearson

There's been a bitter backstage battle in the House Agriculture Committee over the question of putting Negroes on local Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Committees.



Pearson

The battle affects several hundred thousand Negro sharecroppers in the Deep South and could jeopardize subsidy payments to tobacco and cotton farmers. Northern Democrats have been willing to go along with these rich subsidy payments for the sake of party harmony. But the civil rights issue has become so important in the North that this support could easily be withdrawn and if so the farm bill would be defeated.

This is one reason the arguments over Negro participation in the Southern farm program have been held with no Northern Congressmen present.

To avoid leaks, Southern Congressmen met privately with Horace Godfrey, head of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. Godfrey is from North Carolina. So is Chairman Cooley of the House Agriculture Committee. Present were Reps.

L. H. Fountain and Ross Taylor, also of North Carolina, together with such pillars of Southern agriculture as Thomas G. Abernethy (Miss.), "Took" Gathings (Ark.), John McMillan (S.C.) and Paul Jones (Mo.).

The debate was hot and heavy.

"Horace, you're turning your back on your own people," complained Cooley to Godfrey, his fellow North Carolinian. "You're going too far. You set quotas for Negroes' jobs, and there's not supposed to be any quotas in filling jobs. It's unconstitutional."

Cooley referred to the fact that Godfrey had sent a directive to all local Agricultural Stabilization Committees directing that the first vacancy on local committees be filled by a Negro; second, that temporary jobs during the summer be filled with Negroes until the percentage of Negroes employed was equal to the percentage of Negro farmers in each Southern state.

His directive followed a tough report by the Civil Rights Commission pointing out that no Negro served on a State Agricultural Committee in the South; and that only 75 Negroes served among 37,000 members of community committees.

There was immediate revolt in the Deep South against Godfrey's directive.

"If you think you're going

to get a farm bill if you stick to that program," Chairman Cooley told his fellow North Carolinian, "you're just crazy."

Most of those present at the inside meeting were old friends of Horace Godfrey. They had known him a long time. But they found him adamant on the point that Negroes must be given a voice on the local committees that regulate Southern agriculture.

Friendship House

This week Mrs. Lyndon Johnson is giving a lift to an institution that Jane Addams first made famous with her Hull House in Chicago. These "settlement houses," started to help immigrants get adjusted in big American cities, are now usually called "Friendship Houses."

The Friendship House that Mrs. Johnson is visiting in Washington aims at solving the problems of the underprivileged, all the way from finding jobs to getting surplus food to securing legal services. All sorts of people volunteer, from clerks, to housewives, to a truck driver who recently helped a family of five find a bed.

Meeting this truck driver, Rep. Hugh Carey (D-N.Y.) commented, "If we had 50,000 like you we'd be all set."

Mrs. Johnson is giving a lift to this particular Friendship House as symbolic of what is

being done and can be done all over the U.S.A.

Footnotes

The severe-local-storm forecast center in Kansas City, Mo., did a remarkable job of forecasting the tornadoes that struck the Midwest recently. The center issued 37 tornado warnings; later, 35 tornadoes hit in the predicted areas. The two misses struck within a few miles of the areas that had been warned . . . Labor leaders are grumbling over the way House Labor Chairman Adam Clayton Powell put the bite on them to help pay off his \$47,500 libel judgment. He personally invited them to a \$50-a-plate dinner to raise the money. Since they must go before Powell's committee for labor legislation, few turned down the invitation . . . Only half the planes that take off for raids on North Viet-Nam ever hit the target. The rest are fighter planes, which protect the bombers, and photo-reconnaissance planes, which scout the targets in advance; also photograph the damage afterward . . . Sen. Tom Dodd (D-Conn.) has resisted pressure to reopen the investigation into President Kennedy's assassination. Right-wing groups have been clamoring for a probe by the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee to expose the assassination as a "Communist plot."