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Senator Stennis Civil Rights Correspondence B03F33L10

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 29, 1961

FROM THE OFFICE OF SENATOR JOHN STENNIS

WASHINGTON, D. C. -- Senator John Stennis told the Senate today the Civil Rights Commission "is unnecessary, unwise and has contributed nothing to the solution of the problem it was created to study."

Serving as the lead-off team captain of three forces of Southern Senators opposing extension of the Civil Rights Commission, Stennis told the Senate, "It is extremely unwise and a bad precedent indeed for the Senate to adopt the practice of enacting substantive legislation as an amendment to an appropriation bill."

The civil right fight broke out anew today after Majority Leader Mansfield and Minority Leader Dirksen offered a joint motion to suspend Senate rules in order to attach the legislative rider on civil rights to an appropriation bill making money available to run the Department of Justice for another year.

The Civil Rights Commission is scheduled to cease to operate after November of this year, but the appropriation bill carries within it an item for \$300,000 to run the Commission until November.

"I am opposed to the extension of the life of the Civil Rights Commission for two years or for any other time," Stennis said. "I am opposed to it whether the legislation is offered as an amendment to this appropriation bill or whether it is offered as a separate bill."

Stennis, a veteran of 14 years in the Senate, said the proposal to attach legislation to an appropriation bill "is in direct conflict with the rules of the Senate." The time-honored rules of the Senate were not adopted to be so lightly ignored.

Stennis pointed out that a Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee, of which he is a ranking member conducted hearings that lasted 15 days and consumed 1,200 pages of witness testimony regarding the money needs of the Departments of State, Justice and the Federal Judiciary, all of which are included in the big 746 million dollar appropriation bill.

The Subcommittee did not hear one witness nor one word of testimony supporting the continuation of the life of the Civil Rights Commission beyond November.

The record is silent on that point."

Stennis went further to say, "For the Senate to act in this manner and approve a legislative rider to an appropriation bill, there is a definite and unjustified encroachment on the jurisdiction of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"It is a situation which all committees should deplore, and I urge in the strongest possible way that the Senate defeat this move and preserve the orderly procedures prescribed by the Senate rules."

Stennis said Senators who are members of the Appropriations Committee "will resent the action of the Senate" if it should adopt the civil right^s legislation which was not reported as part of the committee recommendations on the original money bill.

"I am deeply disappointed that the Senate did not slam the door on such efforts and forever put to rest this violation of Senate rules and procedures."

Finally, Stennis said, "I urge the Senate to defeat this move to suspend the rules. The Congress created the Civil Rights Commission as a temporary agency with a limited life of two years. That life was extended to four years.

"There has been no compelling reason shown to continue this agency, which was unworthy of creation at all and the Senate should let it die its natural death."