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6403 – Civil Rights Bill

Guest: Rep. Robert T. Ashmore

Morphew: Introduction...member of the House Judiciary Committee, an invitation has been extended to all members of that committee to appear on our program...when we concluded last week, we were talking about the various citizens who would be affected if this proposal were to be adopted...who would this affect?

Ashmore: Well, that is a question that I don't have time to answer in detail. It affects everybody as a matter of fact. I can't think of any person who would not be affected either directly or indirectly. All of these things are not written out in plain, everyday language in the bill. It's by implication and it is by the wide authority that is granted in the bill and when it is considered along with the numerous executive orders by the president, numerous other pieces of legislation that are now on the books, the original Civil Rights Act of nineteen hundred and fifty-seven and the amendment to than in nineteen hundred and sixty, combined with the things that this bill does, will put a blanket over the entire United States. There's never been a bill that granted so much authority to the chief executive of the United States of America as this bill would grant in the rights and in the control of the rights and the liberties of the people of this country, and no one man heretofore has ever been given the authority to control the rights and the liberties and the freedoms of the people of this country as is given in this bill to the attorney general of the United States, not just the present attorney general but whoever might be the attorney general. He has almost unlimited authority, in some cases it's unbelievable authority to bring suit against not only individuals and school trustees, against boards of education, against individuals, even against the state in some instances. You must analyze and read and study from a legal standpoint the entire legislation before you can get the implications and really understand what it does. I have mentioned heretofore some of the things, some of the people it did affect. I gave some details about how it will affect the farmers in their federal aid program, how they could be deprived of

those rights if they were found guilty, not after a trial in court but just found guilty by a federal inspector who comes and says, now, you discriminated against this man because of his race, therefore, we're going to cut off all of your aid of any type. It affects the farmers in that way. I've illustrated on a former program what it would do to the bankers and people who loan federal money. They would be hampered in the use of these funds and how they could be told and controlled, told what to do and controlled in the operation of their business.

Morphew: And even people who deposit money in a bank which is FDIC

Ashmore: That is correct. Not only would the person who discriminated against someone, according to the inspector or federal investigator's opinion, but the bank could be foreclosed or stopped from doing business with this man, and if he didn't do it they would say, well, you have no more authority to use federal funds, you can't make a federal loan or FHA or Fannie Mae or whatever it may be, and even your insurance could be taken from you. The homeowner is deprived of his right to freely use his property as every American citizen has under the property rights that we've heretofore had in this land of ours. A federal inspector would tell you whether or not you could refuse to rent property to a certain person, and you would have to go in and prove that you are not refusing to rent this property to him because of his race or his color or his creed. This is contrary to all concepts of procedure, whether or not and how a man or a person has violated a federal or a state law.

Morphew: Recently in this series of racial demonstrations that we've had around this country, we have heard leaders of minority groups and organizations demanding 'compensatory preferential treatment', in the past the call has been for so-called equality, that no person be denied a job because he is a Negro or member of some other minority group, but now the call is for positive discrimination in favor of someone because he is a Negro or member of a minority group

Ashmore: Yes, I agree that they've gone that far, and that is inconceivable.

Morphew: If this bill went through the federal inspector could actually force someone to hire an unbalanced proportion of a minority group

Ashmore: That gets right at the heart of one of the, one of the most dangerous, and I suppose, one of the most unknown provisions or sections or titles of this bill. It affects not only the man who is performing a labor for wages, the laborer, the wage earner, but it also affects and controls the man who is hiring that person. Mr. Reuther and Mr. Meanie and some of the big men in the labor movement in this country have said that they are for this bill. They're demanding its passage. And I dare say that they don't have the slightest idea what it does to their own union movement in this country. For instance, the bill contains language that all jobs, not just federal jobs but a person contracting a private contract, that job must be racially balanced. We find that language in numbers of instance in the bill. That means that there must a certain number of people of all races on it and if a Negro should come up to a carpenters' hall and say, you have 20 jobs open here, but I

don't see any Negroes listed there, the personnel man at that labor hall would no doubt say under the union system that we follow the seniority system here, the people who have seniority come first when it comes to filling these jobs. That is one of the greatest weapons of the labor movement, the labor union, the seniority system. This bill would practically destroy the seniority system. This federal inspector, if they needed 20 carpenters at this particular union hall, could say, well, you don't have any niggers here, go out and get some, if you have to go out in the street and pick 'em up, it doesn't make any difference. We are going to see that this job is racially balanced. Mr. Meanie and Mr. Reuther, no doubt, has no conception of what this would do to them and I doubt, dare say they don't even know that that is a part of the bill and they will learn that it is a part of this bill when it is passed and enacted, if it is enacted in its present form.

Morphew: And it would also affect the employer, the small businessman who's trying to hire 2 or 3 people to work with him

Ashmore: Absolutely, and really what it does, it means that the federal government would be coming in and interfering with the labor union or the wage earner's contractual rights and the contractor's rights as well. It will be destroying both of them, the federal government interfering in the rights of both, and that is something that we have never had to contend with in this country and I think that we should not have to contend with it because not only does it violate the rights of these people, but it goes a long ways toward destroying the merit system of employment in this country which has been so successful, not only in civil service jobs but under individual employers and employees. That system would no longer control. It would be largely a matter of race first of all, that would be the criterion, not based on merit, not based on competence or experience or character or the ability to perform a good job for the money received.

Morphew: And any business that pays a license fee to a state or city, anyone offering goods or services to the public, everyone who has a child in school or is a voter or has received or expects to receive social security, veterans' benefits, old age pensions, retirement benefits, all of these groups would be affected and yet many Americans are under the impression that this CRA would only apply to a small section of the country, the South...why can't they wake up and realize how it would affect them?

Ashmore: I believe if the leaders in the communities throughout this country knew these facts and were aware of them they would let their friends and neighbors and the officeholders in these areas beyond the South, in areas other than the South, could acquaint the people, their constituents, with what the bill really does everywhere, not just in the South but to all people, there would be tremendous demonstration and howl from the people of this country not to pass any such legislation but to do away with these things that take more rights away from people than they give to this minority group. For instance, school teachers, public and private, they don't know what this bill does. The school trustees have no idea what it does, in many instances. They don't realize that the attorney general can bring suit against them and force them to use federal funds as the federal government says they must be used or they will no longer get those funds.

Morphew: And it can go all the way down to what textbooks they use and teaching a certain course in a certain manner

Ashmore: That was the next, you took the words right out of my mouth. That's what it means. It means that, for instance, if your child eats a lunch at the school that is provided by a federal program or federal funds, the federal government can also tell that school what books they will teach, what faculty will be used, and even where the student will go to school. Now, some people may say, oh well, that won't be done. I don't see how they can arrive at any such conclusions as that because the people that are demanding this type legislation are already demanding those things in some areas that are having troubles, in New York and Chicago and Detroit and Philadelphia and numerous places about assignment of pupils. The federal government will be assigning 'em or else you don't get federal funds. It's just as simple as the nose on my face.