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6345 – Civil Rights Act of 1963

Guest: John C. Satterfield

Morphew: Introduction...from Yazoo City, MS...past president of American Bar Association, also an extremely active layman in the Methodist church at regional and national levels...the CRA of 1963...does it deal principally in the field of race relations?

Satterfield: As a matter of fact, it does not. This legislation is about 10 percent civil rights and 90 percent extension of federal power. In my opinion, it has been under preparation for many months and the reason why it was brought forward at this time, under this auspices and with this trappings, was because it was felt this would be the only way it would be possible for the Congress to pass legislation of this kind.

Morphew: Would it affect a relatively limited group of people or would it be on a rather broad base?

Satterfield: As a matter of fact, it's not generally known, but if a person owns a home, they are affected. And among those who are affected by this act, employers and employees in almost every business in the United States, everyone who belongs to a union, every person who works under federal civil service, everyone who carries on a business that pays a license tax to a state or to a city, everyone who deposits in any bank that has the FDIC, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation protection, everyone who borrows from such a bank, every person in the United States that participates in any farm program that has any connection with federal financing, every person who has a child in school, every person who votes, and everyone who expects to receive Social Security, veterans benefits, old age pensions or even retirement benefits. It covers almost everybody in the United States.

Morphew: In recent days we have seen reports in the press that this civil rights act was watered down while being passed through the House Judiciary Committee, is this a fact? Is it now a moderate proposal?

Satterfield: No, as a matter of fact, the full committee substitute is harsher. It has more extensive provisions. It will have a worse effect on those within its boundaries than the original bill or the substitute bill. It is a fact that it ought to prevent some opposition. There have been a few exemptions such as boarding houses having less than five rooms to be rented, employers having less than 25 employees and some few exemptions of that kind. But it sets up, for instance, a federal FEPC and provides that there shall be appropriated for the first year 2 ½ million dollars and thereafter, 10 million dollars a year to federally police all employment in the United States that falls within the bill and that is the great majority, practically all employment in the United States.

Morphew: This money could be used to hire a force of inspectors to go around the country questioning employers hiring and firing procedures

Satterfield: Absolutely. As a matter of fact, I have been told on good authority it was five years after the National Labor Relations Board was created before it required a budget of that amount of money, 10 million dollars a year. It's expected that this will be all pervasive. In addition to that, all authority is given in the bill for the president and the attorney general to require every federal agency and administration having anything to do with federal financing to police their programs, which will mean that there will not be just 10 million dollars but several hundreds of million dollars available for policing the businesses, the individuals and those who are covered by the bill.

Morphew: You have been devoting a lot of time to studying this bill and public opinion on it, do you believe that the American public is aware of the far-reaching potential of this bill?

Satterfield: My judgment is that they are not. Publicity has been repeatedly given out which is not correct, which indicates this bill is extremely limited in its effect. My judgment is that if the majority of the people of the United States had any idea of the extent of this bill there would be no possibility of its favorable consideration for Congress. For instance, it affects every landowner. It affects every homeowner. It affects the occupancy of the home, the building of the home, the sale of the home, the renting of rooms in the home, in connection with federal financing. And the substitute, while it leaves out the words 'guarantee of insurance' in connection with federal financing, it includes the word 'contract,' therefore, it's just as broad as the bill and it will cover every homeowner in the United States who will be policed by federal inspectors.

Morphew: As president of the ABA, you traveled very extensively and talked with a large number of people, was it your experience that this legislation was favored by a majority of Americans?

Satterfield: Well, as a matter of fact, Dick, I visited and spoke in 46 states at nearly a hundred and fifty different meetings. By the way, I also had the pleasure of visiting 21 foreign countries while I was president of the American Bar Association. My judgment of the feeling of the great majority of the people in all of our states is that they do not favor this type of legislation. We all believe in the proper protection of civil rights of both minorities and majorities, but we do not believe in setting up a federal police state in which millions of dollars will be used to put federal governmental force looking over the shoulder of every businessman of every employee of every homeowner within the United States and that is what this legislation, in effect, does.

Morphew: You and I both live in Mississippi, so we feel relatively free to speak out if we see something like a bill of this type that we oppose, do you think Americans in large cities in the North and East feel that free or would they feel intimidated about speaking out?

Satterfield: Well, it is my judgment that where the tremendous financial power of the federal government is being used for political ends and to attain that which is wanted by the president and the attorney general, that throughout the United States there is a great hesitancy to take a public position in opposition to that which they want and particularly to a bill which extends executive power like this does. I'm afraid that there are many thousands of people in the United States who, realizing the effect of this bill, nevertheless hesitate to actively oppose it for that reason. They are afraid that they will be intimidated financially or otherwise through the power of the executive.

Morphew: In other words, if they could mark their vote in secret, they would be inclined to vote against it but if it is a matter of public discussion, they hesitate to raise their voices

Satterfield: That is true where they know what the deal does. Now, if they have been befuddled and misled by the propaganda which makes this the Trojan Horse of 1963. That is, under the plea of protecting rights of minorities and the civil rights of those minorities, without it being realized, the tremendous destruction of the civil rights and the property rights and the personal rights of the majorities, they might vote for it, but my judgment is that the great majority of the people in all of the states would vote against this legislation when they have the full facts before them and could do so privately without the fear of intimidation or reprisal.

Morphew: But it is a fact that a number of private residents in areas throughout the country have spoken out publicly against this bill

Satterfield: Yes. As a matter of fact, I have had correspondence with the leaders from between 35 and 43 states, I believe it's about 41 states as of today, who are very strongly opposing this bill and my judgment is that they exist in every state in the Union.

Morphew: And many groups have prepared excellent material describing this act, the Virginia Commission on Constitutional Government entitled, "Civil Rights and Legal

Wrongs,” “The Blueprint for Total Federal Regimentation: An Analysis of the Civil Rights Act” prepared by Mr. Satterfield and Mr. Lloyd Wright, another form president of the ABA...such materials are available from us...