

Fight for FEPC Needs Support

By Claudia Jones

Despite bitter poll tax-GOP opposition, staunch supporters of FEPC legislation have battled doggedly in the House of Representatives for the past six weeks in support of a Fair Employment Practice Bill.

This bill is vital to the welfare of 13 million Negro Americans and minority groups. At stake is the establishment of federal non-discriminatory job employment guarantees to 51 million citizens—therefore to the welfare of the entire nation.

Opponents of the measure range from filibustering race-baiting, John Rankin, Senator from Mississippi, to House members of both Democratic and Republican parties. These opponents have resorted to fighting "Calendar Wednesday," the parliamentary rule now being employed by progressive representatives led by Vito Marcantonio. "Calendar Wednesday" permits the alphabetical roll call of committees and representatives directly from the House floor. This is necessary because as yet too few signatures exist on the petition to discharge the bill from the House Rules Committee, where the polltax GOP bloc have successfully bottled it.

The first "Calendar Wednesday" fight, led by Marcantonio and his allies, was defeated by a mere 18 votes six weeks ago. Since then the GOP-polltax bloc has resorted to filibustering the quorum calls; employing outright obstructive tactics, such as railroading motions to adjourn rather than face the supporters of FEPC legislation; demagogically using vitally needed time to make "addresses" on war heroes; endlessly debating astronomy and "weather bills" on which there was no opposition, to avoid a showdown roll call vote, ad nauseum.

But the dogged opponents of the filibustering, two-party sell-out crowd on FEPC legislation have not wavered. The consistent

fight of Rep. Vito Marcantonio, Rep. Adam Clayton Powell, and other representatives have won a numbering of wavering Congressmen to sign the discharge petition.

But this important task cannot be left to them alone. Mass pressure is needed to assure that every representative sign the discharge petition on FEPC—NOW and to hold Congressmen accountable to be at their seats at 12 noon every Calendar Wednesday to vote down the tories and pass FEPC.

FIFTH ANNIVERSARY FEPC

In this connection, friends, and especially labor—and the Negro people have an opportunity to renew their fight in the tradition of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. June 25th is the fifth anniversary of the FEPC. Of course, it will be an anniversary in which there are no principals to fete and celebrate.

The betrayal of FEPC, let us not forget, was the direct result of the sell-out by both the Republican and Democratic parties, with the silent sanction of the Truman Administration. A parting stab at the FEPC committee was its outright killing a month earlier than scheduled prohibiting the FEPC from completing its work. No voice was raised by these so-called friends of FEPC at that time. Significantly enough, in the present "Calendar Wednesday" fight, the Republicans have not hastened to "outdo" their polltax buddies and other Democrats, but have willingly cooperated in absenting themselves or employing obstructionist tactics to avoid a showdown.

To revive the FEPC fight, it must be understood, means to recognize that today there is a complete absence of any federal agency upholding the constitutional rights of job employment for Negroes and other minority groups. When FEPC was first established as a federal policy, during the anti-fascist war, for the first time, a federal agency existed to which Negro and minority

citizens could resort to against job discrimination. Non-discrimination in employment helped to strengthen combatting of discrimination by all federal agencies.

The contrast today with the Truman Administration is noteworthy. With the absence of any FEPC measure or legislation, there has been a sharp downward trend in federal responsibility towards Negro citizens and minority groups. Latest indication is the Nashville Grand Jury report on the Columbia anti-Negro violence which in effect serves notice that government will not uphold the constitutional rights of Negro citizens. The meaning to labor of such a step, if unreversed, is obvious.

"LITTLE" FEPC

Likewise, battle for "little" FEPC's on a state, city scale should continue. Three such bills have been passed in recent weeks. In Massachusetts, a 3-1 vote shows how labor progressive forces did battle. Milwaukee is now the second city to have a FEPC law, although the punishment fines are low enough to encourage violations by employers. Ditto for St. Louis, Missouri. Chicago FEPC city law is under test, as shown in the picketing of Jim-crow restaurants by students of the U. of Illinois, led by American Youth for Democracy. California's drive for a state FEPC, with teeth, is a key issue in the gubernatorial elections. In New York City, Councilman Benjamin J. Davis' resolution for a city FEPC still needs mass public labor-Negro people's support to assure passage.

The way is pointed by these and other FEPC fighters, however, for the next steps. They are: 1) putting heat on every representative for support to "Calendar Wednesday" and to sign the House Discharge petition; and 2) to remember, not their words, but their deeds on these issues in the coming city, state and national elections.