

Warren's Sneak Attack

By Doxey Wilkerson

COMPTROLLER GENERAL LINDSAY WARREN'S recent ruling against Executive Order 9346 is a stab-in-the-back to the President, an effrontery to the Negro and other minority peoples, a threat to the Committee on Fair Employment Practice, and a dangerous blow to the war effort of the nation. Labor, Negro and all other progressive organizations must act quickly for a reversal of this reactionary ruling. It must not be allowed to stand.

Executive Order 9346 was issued by President Roosevelt last May, at the time when FEPC seemed about to collapse under the dual blows of several resignations and WMC Chief McNutt's indefinite postponement of hearings on employment discrimination in the railroad industry. It supplanted the original Executive Order 8802, reorganized and strengthened the FEPC, and broadened its jurisdiction to include, in addition to industries handling war contracts, labor unions operating in such war industries. It gave a new lease on life to FEPC, under the newly appointed, and now recently resigned, Father Haas.



The very core of Executive Order 9346 was the requirement that all contracting agencies of the Federal Government include in war contracts the stipulation that there shall be no discrimination against an employee or applicant for employment on account of race, creed or national origin. This is the provision singled out for the most recent attack on the anti-discrimination program of the Roosevelt Administration.

Although the President's Executive Order begins with the words: "It is hereby ordered as follows," the Comptroller General saw fit to rule that the provision requiring anti-discrimination clauses in Federal war contracts was a "directive" and not an "order" and hence was not "mandatory." The ruling was issued in the case of the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company, which refused to sign an agreement to furnish service to war agency offices in Kansas City, Missouri, unless the anti-discrimination clause was omitted.

Several circumstances suggest that the Comptroller General's ruling is an integral part of the defeatist conspiracy to sabotage the war effort through the disruption of war production and civilian morale.

In the first place, President Roosevelt knew nothing about the ruling in advance. Presumably he was as shocked as the rest of the country by his "reversal" at the hands of an administrative official.

Second, Lindsay Warren, a former Congressman

from North Carolina, whose record on race relations is none too good, is relatively free from executive reprisal or discipline. As Comptroller General, he has a 15-year appointment and is responsible only to Congress. His entrenched position makes him a "natural" for attack upon the President's policies from within. The office has served this purpose before.

Third, the ruling comes at the time that the nation eagerly awaits FEPC's decision on employment discrimination in the railroad industry, on which hotly-contested hearings were held several weeks ago. No move could be better calculated to knock the foundations from under the FEPC before it has opportunity finally to test its strength against the traditional anti-Negro bars of the railroads and the unions with which they deal.

Fourth, the ruling was handed down in a case involving one of the most reactionary and powerful monopolies of finance capital, the Bell Telephone System.

Finally, the ruling strikes at the very heart of the war manpower program, still the Number One home front problem of the war, and fundamental to the cause of victory.

It is by no means far-fetched to infer that the defeatist enemies of the President's win-the-war policies found in the Comptroller General a fellow-reactionary quite willing to play ball, and so situated that he can do so with impunity. His outrageous ruling on Executive Order 9346 is a deliberate attack upon the war production and morale of the nation. It might well have been dictated in Berlin.

Not only must this ruling be reversed; it can and will be reversed. It will fall before the imperative demands of total war-manpower mobilization. It will be defeated by the mounting indignation of the people's front for victory.

The FEPC has appealed the Comptroller General's ruling to Attorney General Francis Biddle. Gifted though that gentleman is in handing down reactionary decisions, even he will not be able to go along with a ruling which so clearly negates the expressed wording of the President's Executive Order and so directly sabotages the wartime interests of our nation. But the Attorney General may need some prodding.

Let every labor and other progressive organization in the country wire President Roosevelt and Attorney General Biddle immediately, expressing full support of Executive Order 9346, and demanding prompt reversal of the defeatist ruling handed down by Comptroller General Warren. Let the win-the-war forces of America speak!

This is not a fight for the Negro, Jewish and foreign-born citizens of our country. This is a fight for the survival and freedom of our nation. It is a fight which must—and shall—be won!