

9/30/65

Copyright by Jack Minnis,
1965.

We're not sure just what is the meaning of the shakeup in Lyndon's civil rights agencies. He's done away with the President's Council on Equal Opportunity (which was just set up last February) and with the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity. We don't know of anything much that either of these agencies have done in their fields. We are told that the Council on Equal Opportunity gave the Stanford Research Institute \$80,000 to tell it how it could go about gathering information on Southern non-compliance with the civil rights laws. We're sure this gave some of the academicians out at Stanford fat expense accounts and pay checks to run around the country asking foolish questions (we know this because we got asked some), but we don't see anything else that was accomplished.

And pretty much the same thing goes for the Committee on Equal Opportunity. It was supposed to see to it that companies which had contracts with the U.S. Government did not discriminate against Negroes in their hiring policies. The main way it acted was through what it called "Plans for Progress." These "plans" involved federal contractors' agreeing in writing that they would not discriminate. Southern Regional Council did a study of companies in the Atlanta area which had signed the agreements, and found that all but a few of them were completely ignoring their commitments. In fact, according to the study, most of the company representatives interviewed did not even know what the interviewer was talking about when he asked about the "plans".

We know of one fellow who worked for the Hayes International Corp., in Alabama. Hayes is an aircraft firm almost all of whose business is provided by government contracts. This fellow says that he got fired because he upgraded some Negroes in jobs on a contract Hayes had with the Army at Ft. Rucker Alabama. He complained to the Justice Department, the FBI, the Committee on Equal Opportunity, and everybody else he could think of. He's been out of a job for 18 months (ever since he got fired), but that's all that ever happened as a result of his complaints. Hayes International still has its contracts.

So, we can't see that there's any reason to mourn the loss of these outfits. The functions of the two agencies have been merged into other of Lyndon's department, the Committee on Equal Opportunity going into the Labor Department and the Council on Equal Opportunity going into the Justice Department. If the two agencies didn't get anything done on their own, we don't see any reason

to suppose they'll be more effective after being merged with existing departments.

Wiley Branton, who used to be Director of the Voter Education Project, was the Executive Secretary of the Council on Equal Opportunity (the Council was composed of the heads of the executive departments with Hubert Humphrey as chairman). Branton has now become a special assistant to U.S. Attorney General Katzenbach. Robert Baker, of the Washington Post, reports that Branton was appointed to this job so that he could more rigorously enforce the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Baker says that "In Branton, the President intentionally picked a man whose understanding of the Federal Government's role under the Voting Rights Act differs from that of Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach. Katzenbach contends that the Voting Rights Act does not put the Federal Government in the business of registering voters and the Federal Government should not launch special efforts to induce Negroes to vote".

Branton, says Baker, feels that "massive use of Federal registrars is necessary to overcome intimidation, discrimination, tradition and apathy. Baker also says that "Branton, in effect, becomes Mr. Johnson's personal representative in the Justice Department to conduct a 'full and vigorous and swift' program of voter registration of Negroes in the South.....The President has now put his man in the Justice Department" to see if the enforcement of the Voting Rights Act can be stiffened.

We're inclined to doubt that is the reason for the Branton appointment. In the first place, unless most everything that's been reported about Lyndon is all wrong, he doesn't put up with anybody who doesn't agree with him. It's been reported, perhaps accurately, that Lyndon once said: "I don't like to deal with a man unless I've got his prick in my pocket." Whether or not the quote is accurate, we can figure that a President who can make a Supreme Court Justice resign to take the Ambassadorship to the U.N., is not going to have an Attorney General who won't do what he's told.

For these reasons we think Branton probably is "Johnson's man", as Baker says he is, but we doubt that Branton was appointed to do a job Katzenbach refused to do. Which leaves open the question of why Branton was appointed.

It may be that Johnson does want more Negroes registered in the South, to counterbalance the shift of whites to the Republican party, but that he and Katzenbach were afraid of repercussions from otherwise loyal Southern whites. In this case Branton will be a convenient scapegoat if the going gets too rough.

It may be that Johnson is fixing to get rid of Katzenbach, so he can appoint Ramsey Clark, the son of his old friend Justice Tom Clark, to the Attorney General's office. In this case, Branton will be a convenient hatchet-man.

It may be that the black power structure made a deal for Branton's appointment in return for not telling what kind of sell-out (the Mississippi Challenge?).

But whatever the reason for the Branton appointment, we know one thing from having been closely associated with Branton for some time. He's a man with a lot of ability as a lawyer, who's not likely to let principles, ideals, etc., get in the way of his ambitions.

If he's been appointed a Special Assistant Attorney General to enforce the Voting Rights Act more vigorously than it has been, then it's because Lyndon sees advantage in it for himself and his friends. Time will tell.

*

*

*

Lyndon's Poverty War got a big shot in the arm the other day when the Congress gave him \$1.7 billion to run it for another year. We don't know how many poor folks are going to be helped with the money, but it sure looks like the rich folks are going to make out right well. Take the Job Corps for example. Sargent Shriver told some House Republicans early this month that the Job Corps camps being run by corporations are much more efficient and effective than those run by educational institutions and political bodies. Shriver said he didn't know for sure why this is so, but, he said, he had a theory:

"They /businessmen/ know how to run things. They are good managers. They know what kind of employees they need. They train people in realities. The kids know they're dealing with reality. Take Camp Kilmer /run by the Federal Electric Co., a subsidiary of International Telephone and Telegraph/. The Management knows what a body repair shop is. It has had experience. There is no play-acting. School is in their /the trainees'/ mind an artificial thing. This is the real thing."

This would seem to mean that more and more corporations going to get more and more fat contracts for training docile workers at the taxpayers' expense. It's of little moment to Shriver, apparently, that the men who run the corporations are interested in the "reality" of only one thing--more profits.

The Washington Post reports that Shriver's office in Washington is becoming openly cynical about the "war". It quotes one "soldier in the ranks" as saying: "The war

atmosphere is gone around here. We're more concerned with intergovernmental relations than with the poor." For those not familiar with the jargon of the bureaucrat, "intergovernmental relations" means politics.

So it looks like the rich and the politicoes will divvy up the \$1.7 billion of poverty war booty, and the poor will just have to look out for themselves. Was it ever different?

*

*

*

Some time ago we mentioned that the FBI would have its own program on TV this fall, and that all the actors, as well as the scripts and other program details, would be personally approved by J. Edgar.

Well, on Sept. 19, the first of J. Edgar's programs appeared. It was a lulu. J. Edgar might just as well have been up there preaching to us about the great moral verities he feels it is his province to uphold. There was this kid whose grandmother had spoiled him and kept him in long hair until he was well along toward maturity. He turned out to be an extortionist and keller of women with long hair (he strangled them with it.) At one time FBI Inspector Lew Erskine (played by Efraim Zimbalist, Jr.) thought the kid was killing because he'd been "raised in a feminist world and he's been getting even ever since." Further on, Erskine's psychoanalysis of the kid matured somewhat. The kid, now, was killing himself, symbolically, everytime he knocked off one of the long-haired broads. The moral? Obvious; don't keep your male kids in long hair, it'll make 'em sick.

Does this mean you can't be a strict disciplinarian with your kids. Most certainly not. Erskine has this 23-year-old daughter (with long silken hair) who's running around with an FBI agent. Erskine doesn't like it. Erskine's wife was killed in an ambush some time ago by a hood gunning for Erskine. Erskine doesn't want his daughter to get involved with an agent for fear the same thing will happen to her. As the episode ends, Erskine is having dinner with his daughter. Thinking about how warped he figures the murderer was, he's worried about maybe he's been too strict in raising his own daughter. He mentions this. She assures him that strict discipline is what children want, because it makes them believe that their parents really care for them.

The program could be called something like "Thought for the Week from J. Edgar." One TV columnist was not so kind. He called it "melodramatic swill."

The program had some other messages: 1) FBI men are strong, virile types whom women can't keep their hands off

(Dina Merrill goes gaga over Erskine the minute she lays eyes on him--he, of course, remembering his wife's death, has sworn off all women.) 2) "The FBI only investigates..." (this, presumably, includes psychoanalysis); 3) FBI rules prohibit any personal relationship between agents and persons involved in a case they're investigating (this doubtless preserves their "objectivity"--Southern cops and sheriffs, please notice. No more hand-holding with J. Edgar's dicks); 4) Strong, virile, men, whom women can't keep their hands off, drive Fords (though the program was sponsored by Aluminum Co. of America, there were two one-minute spot commercials telling people to buy Ford cars. At the end of the program the camera focused on Erskine, driving away from FBI headquarters in Washington. What kind of car was he driving? A Ford Mustang convertible, of course).

The second FBI program, last Sunday, was just as bad. A guy had embezzled money from a bank so he could take his son to Mexico. Inspector Erskine and his sidekick were assigned to catch the thief, with the voices of the Aluminum Company of America Choir in the background crooning "Change for the better with Alcoa," and the screen periodically filled with snap-can beer cans and other of Alcoa's contributions to civilization. The second program told us that FBI agents are always understanding of young people's problems; that FBI agents take cold pills (brand name unspecified); that it's alright for an FBI agent to lie to a person he's interrogating; that everybody should permit the FBI to tap his phone, if the FBI says it's necessary; that FBI agents, at the FBI academy, are taught the very strictest ethical code, which they unflinchingly live by; and, again, as last week, that FBI agents prefer black Ford Mustang convertibles for their private cars.

As we said at the outset, every detail of each program has the personal approval of J. Edgar Hoover. and it's pretty sure that Hoover's not going to get any argument from the people who produce the TV show. The Saturday Evening Post, recently quoted Quinn Martin, producer of the show: "Hoover is a star in his own right. I felt much as I did when I met Cary Grant--that this was a special person."

This "special person", we've long thought, is the leading U.S. advocate of the police state aspects of fascism (as apposed to the economic aspects, which are well-handled by the leading corporation).

Now he has a nation-wide audience every Sunday night into whom he can pump his vicious political views, covered with a thin sugar-coating of "melodramatic swill." And all through the courtesy of the Aluminum of America. No sponsor could have been more appropriate.

* * *
 If you read the newspapers last Thursday, you'll remember that General Westmoreland, U.S. Commander in Vietnam, was reported to be asking Washington to "lift, relax or re-examine the ban on the use of tear gas." Reporters seemed to be a little puzzled, because when they went to the Defense Department and asked what about this ban, they were told that General Westmoreland "has always had the authority" to use "riot-control agents".

Why then, some folks wondered, all the publicity about Westmoreland's asking for authority he already had? A clue to why was contained in a little -noticed AP story filed from Saigon the previous day. The story said that radio broadcasts from Hanoi and Peking charged the U.S. forces had killed 35 persons with poison gas in a raid on Phuoc Son Village in the coastal province of Binh Dinh.

Apparently Westmoreland figured there might be some bad publicity about the 35 killings, so he was laying a foundation for denying that the killing occurred by impressing the public with the alleged fact that he didn't even have authority to use gas. He should have let the Pentagon in on it, so they would have known to cover for him.

And speaking of the use of gas, readers will remember that early this month there was some criticism of a Marine colonel who used gas to drive 400 women and children from a cave near Quinhon. The colonel replied to the criticism by pointing out that it was much more humane to use the gas than to blow up the women and children with grenades, or burn them up with flame-throwers.

It seems not to have occurred to the colonel that there was another question that remained unanswered-- what about just not killing them at all?

But then he's marine, and all marines are taught to think tough.

*

*

*

Jack Minnic

September 30, 1965