

Will he or won't he? That's the question being asked about whether President Reagan will back extension of the Voting Rights Act, slated to expire next year.

In contrast to his all-out push for his economic program, the President has been coy about voting rights. He waxes eloquent on the sacred nature of the right to vote. But for a long time he sent signals that the crucial pre-clearance provisions of the Act should be made nation-wide, which would make the law unenforceable.

More recently he has sent signals indicating he will back extension of the Act as it is, with pre-clearance limited to states and counties found to have discriminated in the past.

But he still says he will wait for a Justice Department study due October 1, 1981 before finally making up his mind.

Given the President's popularity and his proven ability to sway Congress, his studied reluctance to give all-out support for extension of the Voting Rights Act is worrying.

While few expect him to oppose the Act, there is a possibility that he will finally come down in favor of a watered-down version that effectively endangers the hard-won right to vote for minorities in many parts of the country.

The heart of the Act is Section 5, the provision re-

To Be Equal

Showdown On Voting Rights

By Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.

quiring covered districts to submit proposed changes in voting laws to the Justice Department for approval. Nine states and parts of thirteen others are subject to this provision.

We hear a lot about how "unfair" it is to have such federal interference applied to some states and not others. But the covered states and districts earned their submission to federal oversight through long and persistent violations of the right to vote.

Some congressmen recognize this, but want some "bail-out" provisions that let states and counties with clean records escape coverage. Representative Henry Hyde has offered an amendment that would establish criteria including a "clean" record for ten years.

That proposal is attractive to some, but it is pro-

bably premature. Once freed from coverage, it would be very difficult to return a jurisdiction to Section 5 coverage. And it is too soon after passage of the Voting Right Act to be confident that districts won't slip back into historic patterns of discrimination, especially since many states are pressing for re-registration of voters in black areas.

The idea that the Voting Rights Act was necessary to correct the abuses of two decades ago but is outdated today is profoundly wrong. Open intimidation still exists in parts of the rural South. Laws are still passed that would reduce black access to voting and to representation. The Justice Department still overturns proposed voting law changes, most recently a Virginia redistricting plan that would dilute black representation in the legislature.

If anyone knows this it is the Justice Department, whose files are bulging with evidence of attempted abuses and with its own pre-clearance objections to changes in local election laws.

But politics does not always follow the facts, and the danger is that an Administration courting Senators like Jesse Helms and Strom Thurmond could decide to back a compromise with liberal bail-out provisions that effectively dilute the law.

That would deliberately sacrifice constitutional guarantees and minority voting rights to the desires of unreformed segregationists. And it would mean a betrayal of principled conservatives such as Representative Hyde and Senator Barry Goldwater, who support extension of an effective Voting Rights Act.

Representative Hyde originally opposed extension, but changed his mind after Congressional hearings revealed continuing patterns of abuse. And Senator Goldwater supports extension even though he represents a covered state, Arizona.

So the President will find himself in good conservative company by backing extension of the Act. The sooner he does it, and the more forcefully he does it, the better his chances will be to lead the national consensus in favor of extending the Voting Rights Act.

A Plan For Survival

By Augustus F. Hawkins

The Reagan Administration's recent move to relax the "burden" of affirmative action requirements for federal contractors is but one more signal that there is an unspoken commitment to transform a democratic form of government into a government of and for the benefit of the elite. At every turn, the drive to cut federal involvement has translated into death dealing blows to the idea that our government will act to ensure the rights and opportunities of the least fortunate among us.

If we are not careful, the war against affirmative action will no doubt result in a social relapse into the dark age of outright employment discrimination based on race and sex.

The signal that government contractors and other employers across the nation are getting from the Administration's action is that it is again all right to deny blacks, women and other minorities employment — and it can be done with the blessings of the government. Indeed, while the Administration says that it is calling for ALL Americans to make sacrifices in order to lower inflation and decrease our national debt, it is taking actions which cause minorities and the poor to bear the bulk of these sacrifices.

It seems that it has again become fashionable to blame the problems of the nation on those who are least able to defend themselves as a result of their own crippling circumstances.

The message is clear and the need for a coherent strategy on the part of all of us who are under attack is imperative. And we must realize that while we did not all come over on the same ship, we are now all in the same boat.

Our form of government ensures us that the

underlying philosophy of government is but a reflection of the choices we make in the voting booth on election day. However, going to the polls and casting a vote is not enough. In addition to mounting a massive voter registration drive, we must, as never before in our history undertake an extraordinary fund raising effort for the purpose of developing a war chest designed to combat the huge outlays which are being made by groups hostile to our interests. Further, we must begin to analyze the quality of our present representation from the White House to the halls of Congress to the state legislatures and local governments. Where we feel that we are not being adequately represented, we must apply the power of our amassed resources toward the effort to defeat not only those who oppose us but also those who, while sympathetic to our interests, do not do anything to assist us.

The need for such an organizing effort was made quite apparent in the wake of the recent passage of the Reagan Administration's budget and tax package. This agenda would not have passed Congress but for the assistance of Members of Congress, largely from southern states, who despite substantial black constituencies in the Congressional Districts, voted in favor of cuts which will prove disastrous to their black constituencies. In fact, fully one-third of those Congressmen who voted with the President on the disastrous Latta substitute budget "represent" Congressional Districts in which black voters comprise a minimum of 25 per cent of the registered voters.

Every black American has the obligation to speak out and take action against these injustices for nothing less than the survival of black America is at stake.

Plain Talk About The Law

Tips On Buying A Mobile Home

By Billy Aronson
North State Legal Services

Would you like to own your own home? A lot of people who are sick of paying rent but can't afford a house decide to buy a mobile home.

This can be a good idea because a mobile home costs much less, but it can also lead to problems if you're not careful. Here are some questions you should ask if you're looking into buying a mobile home, to help you avoid money problems, health problems, legal problems, and other disappointments that can follow:

1) How good is the company you're thinking of buying from?

Some mobile home dealers get many complaints from people who've bought homes from them. Call the Better Business Bureau, the Consumer Protection Agency, or the Department of Insurance in Raleigh to find out if there have been complaints about the company. If there have, look for another company!

2) What are all of the costs involved?

The price of the home usually doesn't cover the cost of the land where you're going to put it. Depending on whether you're going to rent or buy the land, this could end up costing a lot. It will also cost something to have it set up with water, sewage, and electricity. When you borrow money to pay for a mobile home, you're usually charged as much interest as you would be for a car, instead of for a house, so the interest is higher. Shop around with different banks and loan companies for the best deal. Insurance costs are higher for a mobile home, too. You might be able to get some help with the costs of a mobile home from agencies that help with

regular homes, like HUD and the Farmer's Home Administration.

3) Is the mobile home a fire trap?

Fire deaths are twice as likely in a mobile home as in a house. The fires are most often caused by heating or electrical systems, and can spread very fast. Ask the dealer how fast a fire could spread in the mobile home you're thinking about.

4) What kind of weather is the mobile home suited for?

Each mobile home as a "data plate" which can tell you whether it will do well in the area you're thinking of putting it. Are the pipes well enough insulated, or might they freeze up if you go away for a week in the winter? Is it sturdy enough to stand up to strong winds or might it end up being one of the many mobile homes wrecked by wind every year?

5) What is the air like inside the home?

Formaldehyde is a chemical often used to hold together the paneling in a mobile home. It can cause breathing troubles or sickness for someone living inside.

6) How long is the home likely to last?

The average life for a mobile home that is only moved once is 29 years for a single wide, 19 years for a double wide.

7) What does the warranty say?

How long is the warranty good? Does it cover costs for parts and labor? Can you get warranty service where you live? Don't forget to keep the warranty as well as the owners manual and all other records and receipts in a safe place.

8) Will a different company be moving the mobile

(Continued On Page 16)



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