

SPEECH ON THE SENATE FLOOR BY SENATOR HARRY F. BYRD (D. Va.)
RELATIVE TO THE MOTION TO TAKE UP THE SO-CALLED CIVIL RIGHTS
BILL. For release at 10:00 a.m. Tuesday, July 16, 1957.

The question immediately before us is on the motion to consider H. R. 6127 in a manner which does violence to the time proved rules of the United States Senate, and I want the record to be crystal clear that I am opposed to such disorderly procedure in the Senate and that I shall vote against it.

I am proud to be a member of the Senate which I regard as the greatest legislative body in the world. The rules of the Senate, basically handed down through Thomas Jefferson, are one of the reasons for the great respect in which this Body is universally held.

I have been honored by long membership in this body, and I can tell you from experience that when you start breaking, by-passing, and tampering with the rules of the Senate you are in trouble. It is invariably unnecessary trouble, and frequently it is serious trouble. It's like telling a lie. You can't do it just once -- just a little bit -- and get by. Each time leads to another, and with each breach you become more involved.

That is what has already happened here. In the first place we've got one of the most vicious bills ever presented to the Congress. The brief discussion on this motion has developed that there may be but a scant few members of the Senate who are now satisfied with H. R. 6127 as it was passed by the House of Representatives.

Yet, for neither good nor sufficient reason we broke the rule requiring it to be sent to Committee. So what happened under this procedure? An unperfected bill was given first and second readings in the Senate. It was a bill fundamentally different from the one passed by the House.

Now we are not only faced with the doubtful procedure of voting on a motion to take up a thing called a "star print" which has not been laid before the Senate in compliance with the rules, but also by the fact that the Speaker of the House still has under advisement a question formally raised on the record in the House as to whether the House should recall the imperfect bill which it officially sent to the Senate.

What happens next in this chain of rule breaking events? The Senate will be deprived of the benefit of committee report containing carefully stated majority and minority views. And, deprived of committee report, the Senate will be deprived also of the benefit of the requirements of the Cordon Rule under which the changes made by this bill in existing law must be set forth clearly in comparative form.

The importance of this information was dramatically demonstrated only last week when the Senior Senator from Georgia showed the Senate, the Nation, the President, and the press -- to the confessed surprise of all -- how designing drafters had hidden the fact that a Reconstruction Era statute could be invoked under H. R. 6127 to provide the ARMED MIGHT of the United States for enforcement of the bill's provisions.

This bayonet force is only a sample of the kind of vicious stuff of which this bill is made. I cite it at this point only to show the need for the Cordon Rule which is by-passed under the Senate procedure chosen by proponents of the bill.

How many more rules will be so ruthlessly swept aside in this procedure, so unworthy of the Senate, no one knows, but I venture the assertion that the end is not in sight.

It suffices here to say that we are being asked to take up a "star print" of a bill which, after centuries, re-establishes "star chamber justice", and pass on it in the disorder of "star proceedings."