

A. SYDNEY HERLONG, JR.
FIFTH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS

HOME ADDRESS:
LEESBURG, FLORIDA

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, D. C.

December 12, 1963

Reverend Rhodes Thompson, Jr.
First Christian Church
326 South Palmetto
Daytona Beach, Florida

Dear Reverend Thompson:

Thank you so much for your letter of December 6th. I appreciate your going into so much detail with what you are doing and I commend you for your activities.

You state that it is your conviction that in times of national crisis our elected officials ought to be willing to sacrifice if need be their future political aspirations in order to do that which is best for our nation. In general terms, I can agree with that statement. However, when it comes down to specifics, is this sacrifice that you propose on my part really necessary? The bill is going to pass and my vote won't make any difference one way or the other. It is going to come up for consideration also, so whether a discharge petition is signed by me makes no difference.

Second, if I sacrifice my position in Congress by taking these steps (even though they are not necessary to accomplish what you want to accomplish) but in such a case, I wonder in all modesty just who would be sacrificing most, me or the District I represent? Personally, I would be better off physically, financially and socially if I were not a Member of Congress, but I have fifteen years of seniority in Congress, am a ranking member of one of the most important committees here, and am in a position to do a lot of good for my District. I don't know whether I have the right to throw this away, when nothing constructive will be accomplished by it.

You see, it isn't like mine was the deciding vote. On the other hand, my place would be taken not by one who is not prejudiced but by someone who would be running on an avowed platform opposed to the position that I took if I should sign the discharge petition and vote for the civil rights bill. In your judgment, would the District be better off with someone like that?

Reverend Rhodes Thompson, Jr.

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December 12, 1963

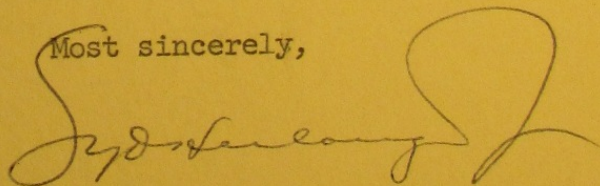
Please don't try to tell me, Brother Thompson, that that type of person would not be elected, because if I know anything, I know the philosophy of the majority of the people in my District on issues like this. Please bear in mind there are nine counties in our Congressional District; one is on the East Coast of Florida, three are on the West Coast and five are in the interior.

As you well know, there are people with varying shades of feeling on this problem. Apparently, you must have anticipated that there might be trouble in your own church when you took the trouble to counsel with your elders before the service where you expected that the housemother from Bethune-Cookman College might answer the invitation to church membership. Had I been an elder in your church, I would have done exactly as your elders did, but there is a great difference, believe me, in church and state.

This doesn't mean that the same general principles shouldn't apply, but when it comes to specific acts, it is a different question. If this were not so, the Supreme Court wouldn't have ruled that we couldn't have prayer in our schools.

It was good to hear from you again and I do hope I'll get to meet and talk with you soon. This letter is being written to you for your own information. I have opened my heart to you. It is not for publication, and I am sure you will respect it as such.

Most sincerely,

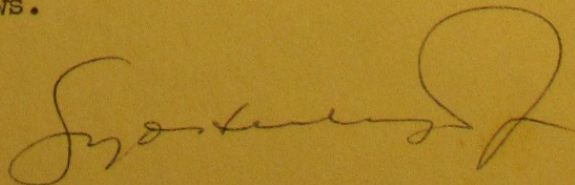


A. Sydney Herlong, Jr.

ASHJr:md

P.S.: Attached hereto is a copy of a letter which I received today from a college girl who has read the bill and knows what is in it. There are seven subjects dealt with in the bill. Believe me, this young lady has made a good analysis of it and I concur with her views.

Enclosure



107-A McCabe Hall
The American University
Washington, D.C. 20016
December 10, 1963

Hon. A. Sydney Herlong
House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20025

Dear Congressman:

Please do not vote for the Civil Rights Act of 1963 the way it stands right now. I am an ardent integrationist but am convinced that this bill will do more harm than good in the very area that needs a civil rights bill the most-- the South.

A major objection I have to it is the fact that the civil rights elements are almost incidental to the vast extension of national control of decidedly private affairs. If there is ever an honest-to-God CIVIL RIGHTS bill, I ask you to support it. This bill can hardly be called equalizing rights, unless you consider it acceptable to take most human rights away from everybody.

A little medicine, taken in the proper dosages and at proper intervals, is a good and healthful aid to cure. But the whole bottle poured down unwilling throats defeats its own purpose; in fact, it is deadly poisonous.

I trust your good judgment not to sign the senseless discharge petition and hope you encourage other Representatives to refrain also.

I go to Metropolitan Memorial Methodist, too, and shook your hand the morning of your association with the church. My very best Florida sunshine wishes to you!

Sincerely yours,

Nancy J. Hartwell
(Miss) Nancy J. Hartwell