

RADIO BROADCAST ON CIVIL RIGHTS BILL
BY
SENATOR LYNDON B. JOHNSON, APRIL 11, 1960

Lyndon B. Johnson:

My fellow Texans.

I want to talk to you today about what has happened in Congress during the last eight weeks.

What has happened is the Civil Rights Bill has been passed. It is not primarily a Democratic victory.

It is not a Republican victory.

It is not a victory for this or that candidate for the Presidency.

It is a victory for the nation, for the United States of America.

It is a victory for moderation, for common sense.

It is a victory for fair play.

It does not treat the south as a conquered outlaw province, but it does establish voting rights for all qualified citizens.

That is what the Civil Rights Bill does.

MATURITY AND UNITY

It is a triumph for maturity in our national politics.

It is a triumph for national unity in a time of great peril and a time of great opportunity, in a world hurtling toward tomorrow and with little time for yesterday.

It is a vindication of the old ideal that this is one nation and not two.

A nation which is richly diverse in its free debates and its contrasting ideals.

A nation which can clash but also a nation powerfully together in the

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end when at last a great decision is made.

What has been proved here in the Senate is that this Republic can freely and fully debate and then freely and fully act, always for the common good.

CONGRESS' FINEST HOUR

I've been a member of the Congress a long time--twenty three years in fact--and I am able to tell you speaking with care and with a sense of responsibility that in my time at least this has been Congress' finest hour.

True, no one has attained everything he wanted, but neither has anyone lost anything to which he would be entitled by the objective demand of objective history.

And, the United States of America has truly and undeniably gained much. We have extended the most important right of man in a free society--the right to vote.

We have validated the ancient image of this country as the home of freedom under law.

We have without loud emotional trumpet blasts' given quiet adult reassurance to all the world, that we are moving forward to sustain the historic mission of this country as the world's leader in human rights.

A HARD WON VICTORY

What Congress has done on this Civil Rights Bill has not been easily done.

We have wrestled here with an old issue of passion and of prejudices.

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We've had to break down and overcome many bitter extremisms.

There have been those determined we should do nothing about Civil Rights.

There have been those who were determined we should undertake so very much that the end result could only have been nothing at all.

THE MAN IN THE MIDDLE

In all of this I have been correctly described as the man in the middle. In a great controversy any man who is in the middle is not in a happy position.

One side will denounce him for not doing enough.

The other side will denounce him for doing altogether too much.

But the very nature of our system, the very nature of every free Democratic society, makes it necessary for some men to be in the middle if anything at all is to be done.

It is very easy to take up the position of no compromise whatever.

For eight decades, before 1957, men took that position and in eight decades no Congress passed any bill in the field of Civil Rights.

A POLICY OF MODERATION

The 1957 Congress, and it is only fair to point out it was a Democratic Congress, made a start by enacting a good moderate bill.

Now, this present Democratic Congress, and I emphasize with much Republican help, has added historic voting rights protection to that 1957 act.

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Eighty odd years there were no bills at all.

Three years there have been two bills.

This has been done as every responsible and impartial observer of Congress knows, because a large majority has been persuaded to adopt a policy of moderation.

Moderation means advance, sensible advance, attainable advance, under the one great imperative of our system which is that we keep this as a government operating by the consent of the governed.

Some men who reject moderation do so with honorable motives.

But, to say they are honorable is not to say they are wise and it is not even to say they truly understand the Anglo-American heritage of government which is our finest and our best political value.

We have passed the best bill we could.

I hope it meets with the approval of all the people in all of the fifty states.

Thank you and God bless you.
