Federal Control of Voting Urged Under New Proposal for Balloting

Would End South's Bans

Standards Necessary to Offset Poll Tax

By LOUIS LAUTIER

WASHINGTON (UPI) — If Congress is going to adopt the Lodge-Gonzalez resolution, changing the system of selecting the President and Vice President, a companion resolution also should be adopted to give the Congress the right to prescribe the qualifications of voters in federal elections.

The Southern States, which stand to gain most by adoption of the Lodge-Gonzalez resolutions and validation of the proposed constitutional amendment by three-fourths of the States, have resorted to various devices to disfranchise large numbers of their citizens. One such device is the poll tax, which still remains in effect in some states despite the fact that the Supreme Court has ruled that colored citizens cannot legally be barred from voting in Democratic primaries. In Southern States because of their raw color, these States are seeking to avoid that decision by setting up various pretentious literacy qualifications and adopting new registration laws.

Would Aid South

The poll tax and the literacy test—the reading and interpretation of sections of the United States or State Constitutions—were devised to disfranchise colored people in the South.

The Lodge-Gonzalez resolution would give to the Congress the right to prescribe the qualifications of voters in Northern states by the division of the electoral votes of a State in the ratio of the popular vote each candidate receives within the State. It would give to one-party Southern States more weight in the election of the President and Vice President.

The more populous Eastern and Middle Western States, where the people vote and pay the taxes which go to support various Federal welfare programs which clearly benefit the people of the South, would be weakened.

Congress May Act

But even the adoption of such a system should have as a necessary a Federal election law to make uniform the qualifications of voters, to guarantee a free and unhampered ballot, and to see that every vote is counted.

Congress has the power to regulate the method of holding elections and the time to be fixed for the exercise of this power. But if the Lodge-Gonzalez resolution, which already has passed the Senate, is approved by the House, not only should the Congress exercise that power but it also should exercise the power given by it the Fourteenth Amendment.

The Fourteenth Amendment provides: "But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice President is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, being 21 years of age, and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, an equal right shall be held to exist in the prosecution or the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens 21 years of age in such State."

Recall Bills Case

From the evidence, voting in the South is clearly denied to a large segment of citizens who are omitted for purposes of representation.

The evidence in the case of the late Thaddeus Billings, on which the Senate refused to seat him, clearly shows that electors were not kept off in Mississippi were such that virtually none of the colored people voted or dared to vote.

The Lodge-Gonzalez resolution should make it incumbent upon the Congress to enact legislation to regulate voting in such a way that every person of voting age in every State in the South will have an absolute, clear and free right to vote in the way he or she wishes.