

## *CHAPTER 9*

### *THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES: "VULTURES IN THE GALLERIES"*

By early February of 1964, Clark Schooler had gained a measure of prestige and position in Senator Kuchel's office. Clark was completely in charge of answering the senator's legislative mail. Only the most sensitive reply letters needed to be checked by Senator Kuchel himself. Best of all, when Clark's secretary answered the telephone, she would always say: "Good morning. Mr. Schooler's office."

Clark loved the sound of that.

One morning the telephone rang. The secretary answered and gave the customary greeting. She listened to the caller for a few seconds, then put the call on hold and said to Clark: "It's Vonda Belle Carter from the NAACP."

"Wow," said Vonda Belle when Clark took the call. "Now it's 'Mr. Schooler's office.' You've really come up in the world. I'm worried you won't have any more time for me and the civil rights movement."

"Senator Kuchel and 'Mr. Schooler' are completely committed to the civil rights movement," Clark replied with a smile in his voice. "What can I do for you?"

Vonda Belle's joking tone of voice turned to one of complete seriousness. "Clarence Mitchell is calling a meeting this afternoon of all the staff people on Capitol Hill who are supporting the civil rights bill," she said. "He wants to lay out a somewhat revolutionary strategy for getting the bill through the House of Representatives without the Southerners passing a whole bunch of weakening amendments."

"I thought you and your liberal house mate from Idaho might be willing to participate in this," Vonda Belle continued. "You can bring your progressive Southern house mate from Louisiana, too, but I doubt that he'll do it."

Anyway, the meeting is at 4 P.M. at the AFL-CIO building.”

Vonda Belle Carter was right about one thing. Greg Netherton of the Southern state of Louisiana declined the invitation to help Clarence Mitchell and the NAACP get the civil rights bill through the House of Representatives. “The spirits of my Confederate ancestors will haunt me forever if I do that,” Greg said.

Clark Schooler and Carl Brimmer hopped into a taxicab to ride up to the headquarters building of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations. The AFL-CIO was providing meeting space for the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. The AFL-CIO building was located north of the White House, nestled among an entire cluster of buildings containing lobbyists’ offices.

More than 100 persons were gathered in a large meeting room in the AFL-CIO building. Most of them were African-Americans, but there were a number of white persons other than Clark and Carl. Vonda Belle Carter called the meeting to order, then turned things over to Clarence Mitchell.

The middle-aged black man stood up and took a few seconds to look around at the audience. Then he launched into a detailed discussion of the rules and procedures of the United States House of Representatives.

“When the House of Representatives considers major legislation,” Clarence Mitchell began, “it resolves into the Committee of the Whole. This simply means that the entire House membership is meeting in committee rather than in regular session. What it really means is that the House is operating under a completely different set of rules.”

“There are only two visible changes when the House becomes the Committee of the Whole,” Mitchell continued. “First, the mace is taken down from its mounting. Second, instead of the speaker of the House serving as the presiding officer, the speaker chooses some other member of the House to preside for him.”

Vonda Belle interrupted Clarence Mitchell and, in a low voice, suggested that he tell the group what the mace was. Mitchell responded: “The mace is a medieval club. It is topped with a metal head and often decorated with fine carvings, jewels, and precious metals. It has been used since the Middle Ages to symbolize the power and authority of parliaments, universities, and city governments. The mace is mounted next to the speaker’s rostrum whenever the House is in regular session.”

“But in the Committee of the Whole,” Mitchell went on, “the mace is removed. And the speaker saddles some other poor representative with the somewhat tedious job of presiding over the debate.”

“But that’s not all that changes,” Mitchell said. “In the Committee of the Whole, there is a very lenient quorum rule. In regular session a majority

of the House, 218 representatives, is required to be present to conduct business. That’s called having a quorum. But, in the Committee of the Whole, only 100 members need to be present to have a quorum and conduct business.”

“And that’s only the first of our problems,” Mitchell explained. “With such a small quorum requirement, just 100 members, a lot of representatives do not bother to attend the debate. That means they’re not there when you need them to vote down weakening Southern amendments. We have to have a way of making sure that all the liberal Northern representatives are present on the House floor when the civil rights bill is considered in the Committee of the Whole.”

Someone had a question. “You mean,” the questioner asked, “that the House of Representatives will amend a major piece of legislation, such as the civil rights bill, with only a small number of representatives present on the House floor.”

“That’s precisely what happens in the Committee of the Whole,” Mitchell answered. “With a civil rights bill, the Southerners all show up religiously and support weakening amendments. If you don’t have all your Northern supporters on the floor, some of those amendments can slip through and become the law of the land.”

“There’s a second problem in the Committee of the Whole,” Clarence Mitchell pointed out. “There are no roll call votes. No written record is kept of who votes for and against amendments to the bill. There are only teller votes. The representatives just walk down the aisle past a teller, a House clerk, to show whether they are supporting or opposing a particular amendment.”

“Then,” Mitchell went on, “when the Committee of the Whole has finished amending the bill, the House resolves itself into regular session. The mace is put back on its stand. The speaker of the House returns to the rostrum. The bill is accepted or rejected by a roll call vote. And that’s the only roll call vote, with the yeas and neas publicly recorded, that is held.”

“The Committee of the Whole leads to a whole lot of deception,” Clarence Mitchell said. “Because there are no roll call votes, a representative can vote for all kinds of weakening amendments to the bill and not be held accountable. Then, when the House is back in regular session, the representative can cast a recorded vote in favor of the bill. Although he’s done everything he can in the Committee of the Whole to weaken the bill, the representative can pass himself off as a strong supporter of the bill because he voted for it in regular session.”

That was a mouthful of legislative information, and a hand went up in the audience. “Does this mean,” a young African-American woman asked,

“that major amendments can be added to bills in the House of Representatives and we have no way of knowing who voted for or against the amendments?”

“Amendments can be passed that gut the legislation,” Mitchell said vehemently. “Amendments can pass that tear the heart out of your bill. And in the Committee of the Whole, there is no written record of how each member of the House voted.”

“There’s a third problem,” Clarence Mitchell said. “Under ordinary conditions in the House of Representatives, the Democratic and Republican whip systems get members to come to the floor and vote on key amendments to major bills. The whip systems are working whether the bill is being considered in the Committee of the Whole or in regular session. A whip is a representative designated to get himself and a specific group of his party colleagues on to the House floor and voting the party line on major amendments.”

“But, when it’s a civil rights bill,” Mitchell said, “the Democratic Party whip system in the House of Representatives breaks down completely. Why? Because the Democratic whip in the House is Representative Hale Boggs of the Southern state of Louisiana. Boggs would be severely punished at the polls by white voters in his home state if, as Democratic whip, he lifted one little finger in behalf of the civil rights bill. The final result is there is no whip system to get Northern Democratic liberals to the House floor to vote down weakening Southern amendments to a civil rights bill.”

“Don’t be fooled by the large number of representatives who have publicly announced their support for this bill,” Mitchell explained. “It’s true that over 220 Democrats and Republicans in the House have committed themselves to the civil rights bill. And they’ve promised to oppose all Southern attempts to dilute the bill. But these commitments are of little value unless the representatives are physically present on the House floor at all times and voting our way.”

By this time Mitchell’s audience, including Clark Schooler and Carl Brimmer, was almost completely dismayed by the hidden tactical problems that needed to be overcome to get the civil rights bill through the House of Representatives unscathed. But there was even more.

“A fourth problem,” Clarence Mitchell said in a weary tone of voice, “is that no writing or note taking is permitted in the House visitor galleries during the Committee of the Whole. If you want to keep track of whether a particular member is present, and how he or she is voting on particular amendments, you have to do it all by memory.”

Having thus articulated the problem clearly, Clarence Mitchell then proceeded to present a solution.

“We’re going to pack the visitor galleries of the House of Representatives,” Mitchell said. “Before each session of the Committee of the Whole, civil rights supporters are going to get in line early and, when the visitor galleries open, go in and get good seats. Each gallery watcher is going to be assigned to watch four or five pro-civil rights representatives to make certain they are present on the House floor. The gallery watcher also is going to memorize whether a particular member is voting with us on amendments or not. In effect, we are going to set up a whip system in the galleries.”

“If a gallery watcher sees that a particular representative is not present for a key vote, the watcher will leave the gallery.” As Clarence Mitchell further explained his plan, his psychological enthusiasm became more evident and his voice rose in volume and clarity. “The watcher then will telephone the Leadership Conference offices, where there will be a master chart of office locations in all of the House office buildings. On each floor in each House office building, we’ll have office visitors stationed at telephones in the offices of representatives friendly to our cause.”

“When word comes from the Leadership Conference that this-or-that representative is not present on the floor,” Mitchell went on, “the office visitor will hurry to the representative’s office, ask to see him or her, and encourage the truant to get down to the House floor as soon as possible.”

“This way,” Clarence Mitchell triumphantly concluded, “there will be no playing hookey. Pro-civil rights representatives are either going to be present for the debate, or they’re going to get all kinds of hassle and grief from our office visitors.”

A young black man dressed in a suit coat and tie stood up and spoke out strongly. “That’s a good plan for getting absent representatives who support us to the House floor,” he said in a somewhat challenging manner, “but what about if the representative is voting for Southern amendments that cripple the bill?”

“Whenever we can arrange it,” Mitchell replied, “the gallery watcher will be a civil rights supporter from the representative’s home district, perhaps someone who knows the representative personally. If the representative starts to vote for weakening amendments, the gallery watcher will go down and have a House page call the representative off the House floor. The gallery watcher will then ask the errant representative to begin to loyally support the civil rights bill.”

At this point, Vonda Belle Carter spoke up. “We won’t just be asking for these misbehaving representatives to vote pro-civil rights on amendments,” Vonda Belle said sagaciously. “We’ll be subtly, but not too subtly, letting them know that their votes on civil rights amendments are being

memorized and recorded and will be made known to civil rights types in their home districts.”

“Their pro-Southern votes will particularly be made known,” Clarence Mitchell said with a smile, “when the representatives come up for reelection.”<sup>50</sup>

The discussion went on for a while, as Clarence Mitchell and Vonda Belle Carter explained the details of Mitchell’s plan and answered questions. It became clear that most of the gallery watchers and office visitors were going to be activist civil rights types, brought in by bus, train, and airplane from around the nation. The longer the meeting went on, the more mystified Clark Schooler and Carl Brimmer became over just what they were doing there.

When the meeting finally ended, Vonda Belle Carter called Clark and Carl over for a private briefing. “We want to have some white middle-class faces in the House galleries to go along with the civil rights types,” Vonda Belle explained. “So Carl, if you’re willing to do it, you’re a gallery watcher. As for you Clark, there are a number of representatives who have virtually no black persons for constituents. They are mainly from upper New England and the Rocky Mountain West. If you would, we’d like you to be, when needed, their office visitor.”

Both young men signed on for the duration of the time the bill would be debated and amendments voted in the House of Representatives.

That evening the Capitol Fellows gathered at the Rotunda restaurant near the Capitol for one of their periodic dinners together. Clark Schooler found himself seated next to one of the female Fellows, a young woman whom Clark had seen around at Fellows meetings but had not yet met.

As was his usual habit, Clark looked directly at the young woman and said: “Hi. I’m Clark Schooler from Senator Kuchel’s office.”

Without missing a beat or batting an eye, the young woman looked back at Clark and said: “It’s always interesting to meet a man who has no identity of his own.”

That response, Clark later realized, was the perfect summation of the personality and verbal skills of a woman whose name, he soon learned, was Bonnie Kanecton. She was possessed of the sharpest wit and the quickest comeback lines of any woman he had ever met. Best of all, Bonnie knew how to be humorously sarcastic without hurting other people’s feelings. In the coming months, Clark frequently found himself being intellectually demolished by Bonnie Kanecton. And he found himself enjoying every minute of it.

Bonnie was that rare breed known as the native Washingtonian. Her mother and father were originally from Chicago, Illinois, but Bonnie’s father

had worked for years as the administrative assistant to a Republican member of the House of Representatives from the Chicago area. Bonnie had left Washington to go to Vassar College in New York, but she had returned to the nation’s capital to get her law degree at Georgetown University.

When Clark asked Bonnie what her assignment was as a Capitol Fellow, she replied simply: “I’m an attorney with the Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments.”

Bonnie and Clark spent most of the meal chatting with each other. The conversation revealed that Bonnie, similar to Clark, was unmarried and available to meet new people and make new friends.

Clark liked Bonnie. In the instinctive manner in which young people relate and respond to one another, Clark said all the right things and displayed all the proper body language to let Bonnie know he was interested in her. And Bonnie responded to Clark’s somewhat obvious early infatuation with her. She invited Clark to come up to her apartment in Georgetown the following Friday night for dinner with her and her two women roommates, who were also Capitol Fellows.

The following Friday evening, Clark Schooler jumped in his 1951 Ford Victoria hardtop convertible and headed from Capitol Hill toward Georgetown. There were many routes by which to make the drive, but Clark chose to drive up Pennsylvania Avenue past the National Theater and the front of the White House. Going that way, he thought, he could see the automobiles of the great and near-great of Washington as they started about their weekend business.

The emphasis was on the word “business.” The talking and persuading and contact-making that characterized political life in Washington did not end on the weekend. In many ways, it just became more intense.

Clark would think to himself: Who’s in that shiny black Cadillac over there? Perhaps it’s the Senate majority leader heading to a state dinner at the White House. And that olive drab sedan with military markings painted on it? Maybe that’s one of the country’s top generals and his wife going to an important dinner at the Russian embassy. And that couple in a green Oldsmobile? Possibly it could be a reporter for the *New York Times* taking the spouse to a dinner and a speech by a visiting dignitary at the National Press Club.

Clark had come to call these kind of Friday and Saturday night social events the weekend hustle. He regarded them as an important, perhaps even vital, part of the governmental process. Of course, many of the automobiles, like his own, only contained people going on a Friday or Saturday night date. But in Washington, D.C., one never could tell when, at what appeared to be a purely social event, a beneficial political contact might be made, or

a vitally important political conversation held, or a crucial deal cut.

Clark found pleasure and excitement in driving around Washington through the weekend hustle. Hey! What about that car with diplomatic plates over there? It could be the ambassador from France on his way to a very exclusive dinner party at a Cabinet member's home in Alexandria, Virginia.

As Clark's 1951 Ford rolled past the White House, Clark noted that the large front porch light was on and a long line of limousines were unloading their passengers. Just like Clark Schooler, the president of the United States had an important dinner to go to this Friday night.

With a little jog left-turn, Pennsylvania Avenue turned into M Street Northwest. Clark Schooler and his automobile were in Georgetown. This collection of late 19th and early 20th Century homes clustered around the intersection of M Street and Wisconsin Avenue. The area was dripping with Victorian atmosphere. The streets were narrow, some of them still paved with rough cobblestones. The red brick row houses, most of them two or three stories tall, were trimmed with attractive woodwork, mainly painted white. The backyards of these homes were small, but many sported an attractive rear patio with plenty of plants and flowers and wrought-iron patio furniture.

Some very important people in Washington opted to live in Georgetown, mainly because of its relative closeness to the White House and the Capitol. In this particular row house, one might find a former secretary of state. Down the street might live a senior member of the House of Representatives. When they were young and newly married, Senator John F. Kennedy and his wife, Jacqueline, made their home in Georgetown.

But, more than anything else, Georgetown was filled with young men and women, many of them single, sharing apartments and, sometimes, entire houses. These young people had heard the siren song of the nation's capital. They had come from all over the United States, hoping to get jobs in government and politics. Their collective dream was to begin professional lives of significance and relevance. And those who could afford the rent liked to live, and socialize, and play together in Georgetown.

Bonnie Kanecton's apartment was on Congress Street, a narrow residential street just west of Wisconsin Avenue. She and her two Capitol Fellow roommates lived in a second floor walk-up. The apartment had a wonderfully spacious living room with two large windows facing on Congress Street. Unlike many apartments inhabited by young people in their 20s and early 30s, this apartment was tastefully furnished. It had Oriental rugs on the floor and comfortable upholstered furniture in the living room.

When Clark walked in, he was immediately introduced to Bonnie's two roommates. One of the young women was named Molly McClusky. She was



from Atlanta, Georgia, where she had worked as an assistant feature pages editor for the *Atlanta Constitution*. Her assignment as a Capitol Fellow was working in the U.S. Navy’s public relations office at the Pentagon.

Bonnie’s other roommate was Mary Samuels. She was from Tennessee. She worked for the Central Intelligence Agency, and that was all that Clark ever learned about her job. Because the CIA gathered information about foreign nations, some of it by cloak-and-dagger spying, CIA employees were notoriously closed-mouthed about themselves and their place of employment. As a Capitol Fellow, Mary Samuels worked on Capitol Hill with the staff of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Both Molly McClusky and Mary Samuels had dates that evening. Soon the living room was filled with six young people talking and chatting and munching hors d’oeuvres that one of the women had, seemingly effortlessly, whipped up. At some point one of the young women suggested they all go to dinner and go ice skating at the Chevy Chase Country Club. To Clark’s complete surprise and wonderment, he soon found himself and Bonnie Kanecton in the front seat of Clark’s car, driving north on Connecticut Avenue toward Chevy Chase, one of Washington’s most upscale and best-known suburbs.

The Chevy Chase Country Club perhaps was one of the most exclusive and influential private club in the entire United States. It was certainly a leading club in Washington, D.C. Among its members were prominent members of Congress, both present and past. The financially successful of Washington were to be found there, particularly if they were old money rather than nouveau riche. One could add tons of tone to a wedding reception, or a dinner meeting, or an awards ceremony, by holding it at the Chevy Chase Country Club.

The “Ch” in “Chevy” was pronounced with a “ch” sound, as in chocolate. It was not pronounced with a “sh” sound, as in Chevrolet. Longtime members often referred to it just as Chevy. “I’m running out to Chevy for a swim,” they would say casually. Or: “Let’s meet for lunch at Chevy tomorrow.”

The Chevy Chase Country Club had all the same things any good private club has, but often with just a little more size and a little more luxury. There was a golf course, which stretched all the way from Connecticut Avenue to Wisconsin Avenue, covering a considerable piece of ground. There was a swimming pool, and even some bowling alleys. And, of course, there was the main dining room, where the power elite of Washington could be found eating dinner any night of the week, but particularly on weekends.

Chevy was also the hangout of that venerable national treasure, the Washington hostess. These were the women, all of them wealthy and well-

connected, who threw the parties that really mattered in the nation's capital. These women and their husbands mainly entertained in their grand homes, often found on Massachusetts Avenue or out on River Road. But occasionally they would throw their parties at the Chevy Chase Country Club.

These were the elegant events that brought together the leaders of Congress, members of the president's Cabinet, ambassadors from the most populous and influential nations, and sometimes even the president himself. And, as Clark well knew, such parties were anything but just social occasions. Many a key deal, or even an international treaty, was worked out in the living room of a Washington hostess, or in a private dining room at Chevy.

For young people, the place to be at the Chevy Chase Country Club was the grill. This casual restaurant did not require a suit coat and necktie the way the main dining room did. And the grill was noisy, filled with young people having lively conversations and occasionally dancing to out-of-date records in an old juke box. There was none of the quiet and reserve and propriety that was so overwhelming in the main dining room.

Clark Schooler and Bonnie Kanecton met Bonnie's two roommates and their dates in the grill. The entire entourage had a casual but filling dinner. The grill was located on the second floor of the main building at the country club, above the bowling alley. The grill overlooked the outdoor ice skating rink. Large plate glass windows permitted party types in the grill, while eating their meal, to watch the skaters zoom and pirouette around the ice.

In the traditional manner of a private club, no one was ever seen paying a bill at Chevy. At one point during the evening, Clark pretended not to notice that Bonnie signed a piece of paper with the number 61 on it. Clark never found out who the real human being was who had to pay account number 61 each month, but he assumed it was Bonnie's father.

Dinner was followed by ice skating, with rental skates available for those who did not own their own. Clark was a reasonably decent ice skater, having played intramural fraternity hockey at Williams College. He could readily skate around the rink side-by-side with a young woman. And, because Clark could skate backward, he could take a woman in his arms and, with her skating forward, waltz her around the ice in the manner of ballroom dancing.

When the young women discovered this, Clark became a very popular skating partner. Clark dutifully split his duet skating time equally between Bonnie and her two roommates.

In the ensuing weeks, Bonnie Kanecton and the Chevy Chase Country Club became an important part of Clark Schooler's social life. At least once a week, and sometimes twice, Clark would be invited to join Bonnie and her

roommates for dinner in the grill and skating on the ice rink at Chevy.

But Bonnie Kanecton introduced Clark Schooler to much more than the Chevy Chase Country Club. She knew her way very well around the Washington social scene. She and Clark went to the Cellar Door, a night club on M Street in Georgetown that featured folk singing as its principal form of entertainment. Bonnie and Clark sat together and listened to baleful anti-war and anti-segregation folk songs whined to the accompaniment of a conventional guitar. They enjoyed hearing emerging folk singing stars such as Judy Collins and the duo Ian and Sylvia.

And Bonnie knew where to find a good meal in the nation’s capital. Clark and she had dinner at Maxim’s, a French restaurant on Connecticut Avenue that really did seem as if it were tucked away in a little corner of the Rive Gauche in Paris rather than in Washington, D.C. And Bonnie steered Clark to Paul Young’s, a downtown restaurant which was particularly popular among the leading politicians and elected office-holders in Washington. One went to Paul Young’s to be seen as well as to get a good meal.

And then there were the parties. If there was a party going on anywhere among the upwardly mobile youth in Washington, Bonnie Kanecton seemed to know about it and have an invitation to it. Clark found himself socializing with Bonnie and her friends at the F-Street Club, a private, in-town, dining and entertaining club located a few blocks west of the White House. Or Clark and Bonnie would gather with other young people at someone’s house or apartment in Georgetown. It seemed that at least one night each weekend, Bonnie had a party somewhere in Washington for the two of them to go to.

At many of those parties, Clark would run into Bernard Martin, the African-American newspaper reporter who covered the riot at Ole Miss with Clark. Bernard would come with his wife, Loretta, who was a strikingly beautiful black woman. It seemed to Clark that Bernard and Loretta had sort of established themselves as the token, but highly acceptable, young black couple to invite to a “with it” party in Washington. Clark noticed, somewhat sheepishly, that he always felt better at a gathering if Bernard and Loretta were there too. That meant that Clark was leading an “integrated” rather than a “segregated” social life.

One Saturday night Clark Schooler escorted Bonnie Kanecton to the annual ball of the Merrie Maids and Noble Knights of Georgetown. This was an organization of unmarried men and women living in Georgetown that existed for no other purpose than to host a sensational dinner and dance each year. Clark found the event to be a Victorian delight, a charming throwback to an age when everyone dressed up in formal clothes and behaved with great dignity and respect for one another.

The band hired for the evening played traditional dance tunes, so called “standards.” But every once in a while the band would belt out one of those noisy new rock-and-roll songs. Amazingly to Clark, women in long gowns and men in tuxedos would step out on the dance floor and, despite their fine and elaborate clothing, go through the accentuated physical gyrations of rock-and-roll dancing.

Bonnie Kanecton was a social leader as well as a socialite. She was a member of the Board of Directors of the Merrie Maids and Noble Knights of Georgetown. There was no question about it. Bonnie knew social Washington like a book. And she was letting Clark read that book over her shoulder. Clark was enjoying, and profiting, from every word of the book.

Meanwhile, Clark Schooler and Carl Brimmer were spending their daytime hours helping Clarence Mitchell and the NAACP get the civil rights bill through the House of Representatives. Carl Brimmer kept tabs from the House galleries on four members from Idaho and Montana, two of whom he had met personally. It turned out to be dull work. All four representatives were unusually faithful about staying on the House floor and voting solidly to reject all weakening Southern amendments.

But Carl Brimmer enjoyed getting a bird’s-eye view of the debate. With a coalition of liberal Northern Democrats and moderate Midwestern Republicans supporting the bill, most of the action consisted of weakening Southern amendments being voted down by substantial majorities.

Carl quickly divined how the system worked. The liberal Northern Democrats were taking their cues from Emanuel Celler, the chair of the House Judiciary Committee. The moderate Midwestern Republicans were getting their signals from William McCulloch, the ranking Republican on the Judiciary Committee. If a Southern amendment was a weakening one unacceptable to the civil rights forces, Representative Celler and Representative McCulloch both would speak briefly against it. Civil rights supporters on the House floor would get the message, no matter how arcane or complex the language of the amendment might be. The Southern amendment would be quickly voted down.

Carl Brimmer also noticed something else going on as the civil rights bill was under consideration in the House of Representatives. Nicholas Katzenbach, the deputy attorney general in the Civil Rights Division at the Justice Department, also was in the gallery during most of the debate. When problems arose on the floor for the civil rights forces, Nicholas Katzenbach left the gallery and went down and met with Emanuel Celler and William McCulloch just off the House floor. Sometimes these impromptu strategy sessions were held in the office of John McCormack of Massachusetts, the speaker of the House.

One time Carl Brimmer saw Clarence Mitchell and Joseph Rauh, the lobbyists for the Leadership Conference, join Nicholas Katzenbach in one of his meetings with representatives Celler and McCulloch. It was obvious that Katzenbach, an employee of the executive branch, and Mitchell and Rauh, two lobbyists, were directly involved in making legislative strategy for getting the civil rights bill passed in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Carl Brimmer encountered some real excitement the day the funds cut-off was being debated. Representative Oren Harris, a Democrat from Arkansas, offered an amendment that would have made the funds cut-off optional. Under the terms of the amendment, U.S. Government officials would have been given a great deal of latitude in cutting off funds to state government programs that practiced racial discrimination. Under the original bill, the cut-off of funds was mandatory.

This amendment, a typical Southern attempt to weaken the bill, ordinarily would have attracted no attention and been routinely voted down. But, in a complete surprise to the civil rights forces, Representative Hale Boggs, the House Democratic whip, gave a stirring speech in support of Representative Harris's amendment. Because Boggs was the Democratic whip and therefore part of the House Democratic leadership, civil rights supporters immediately became suspicious. They feared that, behind their backs, the Democratic leaders in the House were about to give in to the Southerners and intentionally weaken the bill.

Republican Representative John Lindsay of New York, a committed civil rights supporter, quickly organized a strong counterattack against the Harris amendment.

“This amendment will gut the funds cut-off provision,” Lindsay told the House, shaking his fist in anger as he said the word “gut.” Lindsay railed on: “This is the biggest mousetrap that has been offered since the debate on this bill began. I am appalled that this is being supported in the well of the House by the Democratic whip. Does this mean there is a cave-in by the Democratic leadership on this important title.”<sup>51</sup>

As this mini-crisis deepened on the House floor, the word spread among the Leadership Conference gallery watchers to get every pro-civil rights representative on to the House floor. The vote could be close when the Harris amendment came up for a vote. Although a Southerner, Hale Boggs was a popular and powerful leader in the Democratic Party. He just might have enough influence to get the Harris amendment through, particularly since all the Southerners were lined up solidly behind it.

One of the gallery watchers, a black woman from Boston, Massachusetts, noticed that one of the representatives she was watching for, a man from Vermont, was not present on the House floor. She rose instantly from

her seat and hurried out of the House gallery. Moments later she was telephoning the Leadership Conference offices, dutifully reporting the Vermont representative's absence at this key moment in the floor debate on the civil rights bill.

Clark Schooler had been sitting at a desk with a telephone deep in the depths of the Longworth House Office Building. He had brought along a stack of work, mainly copies of *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*. He was reading them in order to keep up with what was going on in both houses of Congress. He was deeply engrossed in an article about a bill providing for a new dam and recreational lake in northern California when the telephone rang. Clark virtually jumped when the phone's bell sounded. Up to this point in time, he had found his duties as an office visitor to be less than demanding.

"Things are exploding on the House floor," Vonda Belle Carter said. "We need every last pro-civil rights vote, and we need those votes on the House floor right now." She then gave Clark Schooler the name and the office number of the absent representative from Vermont. "Do whatever you can to get him present and voting," Vonda Belle said as she ended the telephone call. "And do it pronto!"

Clark always enjoyed visiting the offices of the various senators and representatives. Typically, these offices were decorated with photographs and paintings of the state or the district from which the senator or representative came. One time, when Clark had been in the office of a senator from North Carolina, he had been transfixed by a set of marvelous photographs of the Atlantic beaches of eastern North Carolina. The surf was rolling in, the sandy beaches appeared to stretch for miles, and the beautiful red and orange colors of a glorious sunrise were reflected in the fluffy clouds hanging above the ocean.

Another time, Clark had stopped by the office of a representative from western Colorado. There was a large painting of the Rocky Mountains. It filled almost an entire wall and completely dominated the entrance room to the office suite. The colorful evergreen forest of the lower slopes of the Rocky Mountains contrasted magnificently with the soaring grey granite mountain peaks, some still covered with the white of spring snows. Clark often said that visiting a senator's or representative's office was like taking a mini-tour of the part of America the senator or representative represented in Congress.

With such a mini-tour in mind, Clark was not disappointed when he walked into the office of his assigned representative from Vermont. Apparently the representative's part of Vermont was apple country, because there were beautiful photographs of apple trees and apple orchards tastefully

distributed around the walls. There also were photos of classic white-painted New England churches and sleepy New England villages nestled at the foot of verdant New England foothills. There even was a painting of a classic New England covered bridge.

“The representative can see you in just a few minutes,” the receptionist said. She was a strikingly attractive and well-dressed young woman with an unmistakable New England accent. She asked sweetly: “Would you like to have a mug of apple cider while you’re waiting?”

“No thank you,” said Clark. “I’m not thirsty. I’ll just sit here and enjoy all these photographs of your representative’s home district.”

The receptionist busied herself at her desk, but after about two minutes she looked up at Clark and said, a little more pointedly but still very nicely: “Are you certain you wouldn’t like to have a mug of our delicious apple cider?”

The light bulb of realization finally blazed on in Clark Schooler’s brain. No one, he suddenly understood, ever went in to see this particular representative without having a tall mug of Vermont apple cider in his or her hand. It was so obvious that Clark was literally embarrassed. Apple cider was the main product and principal employment producer in this representative’s home district. Anyone who visited his office was going to drink a mug full of Vermont apple cider, whether the person wanted it or not.

“You want everyone who comes here to have some apple cider, don’t you?” The words were barely out of Clark’s mouth when the young woman stepped to a close-by mini-refrigerator and poured Clark his apple cider. It was served in a glass mug with a nice handle on it. The mug was large and had a picture of an apple orchard, an apple tree, and a wooden barrel of apple cider engraved on it. “You can keep the mug as a souvenir of your visit,” the receptionist said. She escorted Clark in to see the representative.

He was a relatively young man in his early 40s. He was good looking, as many politicians are, and had something of a no-nonsense air about him that Clark found typical of most members of Congress. There was a large jug of apple cider sitting on one corner of his desk. Close to his right hand was a mug of apple cider, which he drank from periodically while he and Clark were talking. His mug was the same engraved glass mug that Clark had been given to drink from and take with him as a memento of the encounter.

“Your presence is badly needed on the House floor,” Clark began the conversation. “The Southerners are trying to weaken the civil rights bill with an amendment that makes the funds cut-off discretionary rather than required. Hale Boggs, the House Democratic whip, is backing the amendment, so we need every last vote we can find to kill this amendment dead in its

tracks.”

Clark decided to emphasize his message by taking a long drink from his mug of apple cider.

“We don’t have very many black persons in Vermont,” the representative said. “In fact, we have hardly any at all. As a result, the funds cut-off is going to have virtually no effect in Vermont. I thought I would leave the voting on funds cut-off amendments to representatives from states that would be affected by them. Besides, I had some letters to write and telephone calls to make back to my home district.”

Clark framed his response with an appeal to national responsibility. “It’s true that there are very few blacks in northern New England,” Clark said. “I know that’s true, because I went to Williams College in western Massachusetts, and there were hardly any black persons around there, either. But civil rights is an issue of national significance. The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights is urging you to support the black people’s quest for freedom all over America, not just in Vermont.”

“Your responsibilities to your district are important,” Clark continued, interspersing almost every sentence with a sip of apple cider. “But equally important are your responsibilities to all of the American people. After all, you sit in the United States House of Representatives, not the Vermont House of Representatives.”

Clark hoped he had not sounded too much like a college professor in making such a statement to a member of Congress. To Clark’s great relief, the representative began looking somewhat embarrassed rather than angry.

“I thought I’d try to steal a few minutes and get some of this junk off my desk,” the representative said with something of a sense of resolve coming into his voice. “But I can see that was a mistake. The civil rights bill is important. I need to be down on the House floor.”

The representative then smiled at Clark. “I promise you this. You won’t ever have to come and summon me to the House floor again on this civil rights bill. And, by the way, it’s nice to see that your ad hoc whip system, which I’ve been reading about in the newspaper, really does work. If nothing else, I gave you a chance to test it out.”

The representative from Vermont escorted Clark out of his office. Then the two men walked briskly from the Longworth House Office Building to the House of Representatives and the door to the House floor. Along the way, it turned out that the representative was interested in a bill that Senator Kuchel was supporting, a bill providing U.S. Government subsidized health care for citizens over the age of 65. Clark briefed the representative on some of the provisions of the bill. Clark promised to send over some printed information on the bill from Senator Kuchel’s office.



Clark returned to his post in the Longworth House Office Building. He telephoned Vonda Belle Carter and left a message for her with the volunteer who answered the telephone. The errant representative from Vermont, Clark reported, was now “present and voting” on the floor of the House.

Thinking of this incident with the representative from Vermont, Clark reminded himself that members of Congress are required to serve both immediate constituent interests and somewhat broader and more general national interests. In this case, Clark opined to himself, the representative from Vermont had needed a little direct encouragement to make national interests as important as constituent interests.

Carl Brimmer had been keeping tabs on all the action from the House galleries. The Harris amendment making the funds cut-off optional was moving rapidly toward a vote. Additional representatives were coming through the doors on to the House floor. They had been stirred to action by telephone calls and office visits that had been generated by Clarence Mitchell’s gallery watchers.

The situation clarified somewhat when Republican William McCulloch of Ohio, the senior Republican on the House Judiciary Committee and a strong civil rights supporter, proceeded to a microphone. “If the Harris amendment is adopted,” McCulloch intoned with great gravity in his voice, “my individual support of this legislation will come to an end.”<sup>52</sup>

William McCulloch’s statement turned the tide on the Harris amendment. To keep McCulloch and his Republican allies supporting the civil rights bill, the Northern Democrats in the House had no choice but to stick with the Republicans and vote down the proposal to make the funds cut-off optional. When the members of the House finished walking past the “yea” teller and the “nay” teller, the amendment had been easily rejected.

The defeat of the Harris amendment in no way slowed down the commitment of Southern representatives to try to weaken the civil rights bill. A few days later, in early February of 1964, Representative Howard Smith of Virginia introduced an amendment to prohibit discrimination in employment on the basis of sex as well as race, religion, and national origin.

At first glance, one might think such an amendment would strengthen the civil rights bill. But there was method in Representative Smith’s madness. He knew many members of the House of Representatives were strongly opposed to requiring equal treatment of the sexes by law. If Smith succeeded in getting his amendment added to the bill, these representatives might vote against the civil rights bill when it came up for final passage in the House.

“Howard Smith is using one of the oldest of legislative devices,” Clark Schooler pontificated to no one in particular when he learned about Smith’s

sex amendment. "It's called divide the opposition. Smith isn't really interested in promoting women's rights. What he wants to do is get the civil rights supporters who are for women's rights fighting with the civil rights supporters who are against them."

Because Howard Smith was chair of the House Rules Committee, and thus considered part of the House Democratic leadership, his sex amendment attracted a great deal of attention from the press and the public. Smith used the occasion to make enthusiastic speeches in favor of women's rights. "It is indisputable fact that, all throughout industry, women are discriminated against," Smith said. "Generally speaking, they do not get as high compensation for their work as the male sex gets."

Smith then made a statement that summed up his true feelings about the civil rights bill and his sex discrimination amendment: "This bill is so imperfect, what harm will this little sex amendment do?"<sup>53</sup>

Representative Edith Green, a Democrat from Oregon, saw through Howard Smith's plan to complicate the issue of racial discrimination with the quite separate and considerably different issue of sex discrimination. She told her House colleagues: "At the risk of being called an Aunt Jane, if not an Uncle Tom, let us not add any amendment to the civil rights bill that will get in the way of our primary objective. I support the equal treatment of women in employment, but I do not believe this is the time or the place for this amendment."<sup>54</sup>

Clarence Mitchell and his gallery watchers and office visitors began routinely rounding up both Democratic and Republican members of the House to vote down Howard Smith's sex discrimination amendment. And Vonda Belle Carter, as she had been doing all along, was helping to coordinate the battle from Leadership Conference headquarters. But then something went terribly wrong for the civil rights forces. A group of women members in the House of Representatives, including both Democrats and Republicans, began a concerted drive to pass the Smith amendment and add a prohibition on sex discrimination in employment to the civil rights bill.

Leading the fight was Representative Martha W. Griffiths, a Democrat from Michigan and a white woman. She went to a microphone on the House floor and pointed out that the civil rights bill would protect the employment rights of black women but would leave white women with no protection at all.

"If this bill passes the way it is now," Representative Griffiths said, "white men will continue to have tremendous advantages over white women in employment. But this bill is going to take black men and black women and give them equal employment rights. Down at the bottom of the list is going to be a white woman with no rights at all. White women are going to

be last in line at the hiring gate. A vote against this amendment today by a white man is a vote against his wife, or his widow, or his daughter, or his sister.”<sup>55</sup>

Next at the microphone was Representative Katharine St. George, a Republican from New York. “This amendment will simply correct something that goes back, frankly, to the Dark Ages,” she said, sounding like a school marm lecturing a classroom full of unruly students. “The addition of that little, terrifying word, s-e-x, will not hurt this legislation in any way.” She then spoke directly to her men colleagues in the House: “We outlast you. We outlive you. We nag you to death. We are entitled to this little crumb of equality.”<sup>56</sup>

Clark Schooler realized some form of trouble was brewing when he got an office visitor assignment on the sex discrimination amendment from Vonda Belle Carter. She gave Clark the name and office location of the missing representative that Clark was to corral and try to drive down to the House floor to vote against Howard Smith’s sex amendment. Then, as sort of an afterthought, Vonda Belle said: “I really do feel like I’m working against my white sisters on this one.”

“Well,” Clark huffed into the telephone. “You aren’t going to join forces with Howard Smith and the Southern Democrats are you? That makes as much sense as all the chickens deciding to go into business with Colonel Sanders.”

Clark’s reference was to a newly emerging chain of fried chicken restaurants, Kentucky Fried Chicken, which was owned by a man named Colonel Sanders. The colonel appeared in the advertising for the restaurants, wearing a white Palm Beach suit and sporting a pointed mustache and having a heavy Southern accent and looking every bit the part of a “Southern colonel.”

“I know,” Vonda Belle replied. “I feel terribly guilty about this. I don’t want to help the Southern Democrats in any way whatsoever. But white women are almost as badly discriminated against on the job as black men and women are. Why can’t we have this in the bill? It would really change things.”

“You can say that again,” Clark said. “There are only about 20 million black men and women in this nation. But there are over 100 million white women. It won’t be a civil rights bill any more. It mainly will be a women’s rights bill.”

But the forces of legislative history turned out to be with Vonda Belle Carter rather than Clark Schooler. As a result of near instantaneous but skillful legislative engineering by Representative Martha Griffiths, the civil rights majority in the House of Representatives broke apart over the issue

of non-discrimination against women in employment. When the vote was taken, Howard Smith's sex amendment passed by a vote of 168 to 133.

"I saw a unique opportunity when Representative Smith introduced the amendment," Martha Griffiths later told the press. "Smith had just given us 100 Southern Democratic votes in support of women's employment rights. Using those Southern votes as a base, I figured I could split off enough pro-women's rights votes from the civil rights coalition to get the amendment passed. And that's exactly what happened."<sup>57</sup>

It was a reminder to Clark Schooler that real surprises can take place when legislation is being debated in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. Neither President Johnson, nor the Justice Department, nor the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, nor the NAACP had wanted women's employment rights added to the civil rights bill. But an unlikely coalition of Southern Democrats and women's rights supporters put the provision in the bill all the same.

"I'll bet," Clark Schooler later said to Vonda Belle Carter and Carl Brimmer, "that Howard Smith never remotely suspected that the women members of the House would take his sex amendment so seriously. If old Howard had any inkling his amendment would actually be added to the bill, well, I'm sure old Howard would have never introduced it."

Clarence Mitchell's gallery watcher and office visitor system was proving very effective at maintaining high levels of attendance and voting on the House floor. This was true even for the Tuesday-to-Thursday set. These were representatives from the East Coast who lived close enough to Washington to go home to their districts for extra-long Friday-through-Monday weekends. But suddenly these representatives were showing up for Monday, Friday, and even Saturday sessions.

Joseph Rauh of the Leadership Conference was particularly impressed with this sudden break with long-standing congressional tradition. "When the Tuesday-to-Thursday eastern congressmen answered present to a quorum call on a Saturday," Rauh said, "old timers began talking about miracles."<sup>58</sup>

But was the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights over-organized in its efforts to pass the civil rights bill? Was the gallery watcher and office visitor system proving too effective? That suddenly became the case. The Southerners, unable to get any of their weakening amendments passed in the House, began attacking the gallery watcher and office visitor system rather than the civil rights bill itself. "This monstrous bill," fumed Southern Democratic Representative James A. Haley of Florida, "would not be winning were it not for those vultures in the galleries."<sup>59</sup>

Faced with such criticism, Clarence Mitchell reluctantly sent his gallery

watchers and office visitors back to where they had been recruited from. Carl Brimmer abandoned his post in the House gallery. Clark Schooler left his borrowed desk and telephone in the Longworth House Office Building. The excitement ended for both young men as they reluctantly returned to their more routine assignments as Senate aides.

One reason Clarence Mitchell withdrew his gallery watchers and office visitors was that the vast majority of the non-Southern members of the House of Representatives had been totally sensitized to the importance of quashing all weakening amendments to the bill. The momentum behind the civil rights bill had become so great that even the equal employment opportunity provisions, the provisions that many pundits and prognosticators said would be removed in the House of Representatives, were adopted virtually unchanged.

By Monday evening, February 10, 1964, the Committee of the Whole had finished its work. The House of Representatives convened in regular session. The mace, that ornate Medieval club, was placed back in its mounting. And the speaker of the House, John W. McCormack of Massachusetts, took charge of the proceedings.

The House passed the civil rights bill by a record vote of 290 to 130. Clark Schooler, Carl Brimmer, and Vonda Belle Carter watched this sweet moment of victory from the House gallery. The three young people were elated with the results. The coalition of liberal Northern Democrats and moderate Republicans, first assembled at President Kennedy’s now-legendary night meeting at the White House, had held together and prevailed completely over the Southern Democrats.

As Clark, Carl, and Vonda Belle were leaving the House gallery after final passage of the bill, they encountered Clarence Mitchell and Joseph Rauh in the hallway. They all stopped to chat with one another and enjoy this moment of legislative triumph. About this time, a Leadership Conference intern came up to Clarence Mitchell and Joseph Rauh with a message to call President Johnson at the White House.

The two men left the group and went to a nearby telephone booth. They returned a few moments later with weary but rejoicing looks on their faces. “Despite all our hard work getting the civil rights bill through the House,” one of them said, “there will be no rest for the legislatively weary.”

Lyndon Johnson had worked hard from the White House to get the civil rights bill passed in the House of Representatives. He had made many telephone calls and squeezed lots of elbows in the bill’s behalf. Now, the president had virtually shouted his instructions to Mitchell and Rauh into the telephone. He said:

“What are you fellows doing about the Senate? We’ve got the bill

through the House. Now we've got the big job of getting it through the Senate!"<sup>60</sup>

### *In The Interim*

*The House of Representatives is considerably more partisan in the 2000s than it was in the 1960s. But many observers, particularly older scholars, argue that the House of Representatives was a better legislative body when it was less party oriented and passed most legislation on a bipartisan basis.*

*Public opinion polls in the early 2000s reported that the American public wanted less partisanship in Congress and more cooperation between the two major parties when enacting legislation.*

50. Clarence Mitchell, Jr., on civil rights problems in the Committee of the Whole is from Clarence Mitchell, Jr., interview by the author, August 17, 1983, Baltimore, MD. Also see Clarence Mitchell, Jr., interview, April 30, 1969, Tape 1, p. 28; Tape 2, pp. 1-2; Oral History Collection, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas. Also see "How Supporters 'Got out the vote' on Key Amendments," Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, February 21, 1964, p. 365.
51. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, February 14, 1964, p. 293.
52. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, February 14, 1964, p. 293-294.
53. Congressional Record 110, Pt. 2 (February 8, 1964), p. 2577. See also Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, February 14, 1964, p. 296. See also Time, February 21, 1964, p. 22.
54. Congressional Record 110, Pt. 2 (February 8, 1964), p. 2581. See also Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, February 14, 1964, pp. 296-297. See also Time, February 21, 1964, p. 22.
55. Congressional Record 110, Pt. 2 (February 8, 1964), p. 2578-2580. See also Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, February 14, 1964, p. 296.
56. Congressional Record 110, Pt. 2 (February 8, 1964), p. 2581. See also Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, February 14, 1964, p. 296. See also Time, February 21, 1964, p. 22.
57. Jo Freeman, *The Politics Of Women's Liberation* (New York, NY: Longman, 1975), pp. 53-54. Also see Congressional Record 110, Pt. 2 (February 8, 1964), pp. 2581-2582.
58. Joseph L. Rauh, Jr., *The Role of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights in the Civil Rights Struggle of 1963-1964*, in Robert D. Loevy, ed., *The Civil Rights Act of 1964*, p. 63.
59. Congressional Record 110, Pt. 2 (February 7, 1964), p. 2503. Also see Joseph L. Rauh, Jr., *The Role of the Leadership Conference on*

Civil Rights in the Civil Rights Struggle of 1963-1964, in Robert D. Loevy, ed., *The Civil Rights Act of 1964*, p. 65.

60. Joseph L. Rauh, Jr., *The Role of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights in the Civil Rights Struggle of 1963-1964*, in Robert D. Loevy, ed., *The Civil Rights Act of 1964*, p. 64. Also see Clarence Mitchell, Jr., interview, April 30, 1969, Tape 1, pp. 30-31, Oral History Collection, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas.