

Senator Griffin Raps Timing Of Abe Fortas Appointment

Should the United States Senate condone the "cronyism of President Lyndon Johnson?"

That, in a nutshell, is how Sen. Robert Griffin, R-Mich., views the Senate debate over confirmation of President Johnson's recent appointments to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Griffin, who is leading the fight against approval of Abe Fortas as Chief Justice and Homer Thornberry as Associate Justice, addressed reporters at a brief news conference in Detroit's Metropolitan Airport Wednesday. The Senator was returning to Michigan for the Fourth of July holiday.

President Johnson announced several weeks ago the appointment of Justice Abe Fortas as Chief Justice and Circuit Court Justice Homer Thornberry as Justice to the Supreme Court.

The United States Constitution requires the Senate to approve any appointment to the Court.

Griffin and other Senate Republicans have spoken out against the appointments, claiming Johnson chose the men as friends and not as the most qualified candidates.

Griffin said he held no personal objections to Johnson's appointments, but added he thought thousands of other lawyers were as qualified for a seat on the Supreme Court.

Thornberry, a former Texas Democratic congressman and long-time Johnson friend, is now a circuit judge.

"What I do object to," said Griffin, "is the manner and timing of the President's appointments."

"The White House is pulling out all the stops trying to ram through these appointments," he said. "If the Senate acts as a rubber stamp now, any future President will feel free to appoint his cronies to the Supreme Court."

"We senators must get our story across to the people. This is more than a partisan fight; it is a historical debate of far-reaching consequences."

"The people of the United States are in the process of choosing new leaders," Griffin continued. "I believe the Senate should wait for the people to speak in November before approving appointments."

Griffin evaded questions as to whether he would back the appointments if President Johnson were seeking another term.

THE SENATOR also refused to elaborate on reports that he had received phone calls from Michigan business executives pressuring him to support President Johnson. "That would be getting away from the issue at hand," he said.

According to Griffin, debate should reach the Senate floor sometime in the middle of July.

"Right now, we can claim the support of 19 or 20 senators," Griffin said. "We are not

trying to start a filibuster, but this is an important issue and discussion could last a long, long time."

Answering questions in other areas, Griffin said he would like to see stronger gun control legislation passed. But, he added quickly, "gun control legislation is not in itself a solution to crime in America."

As to the Republican Presidential nomination, he feels Richard Nixon is "a long way down the road to nomination."

"If the convention were held today, Nixon would certainly win. But a lot can happen between now and the Miami convention," he added.

Advance State Aid Available

Advance state aid for education, some \$20 million will be made available this week to hard hit school districts in Michigan.

According to state superintendent Ira Polley, the funds "may prove to be some of the best invested money in Michigan education."

The monies were authorized by the State Board of Education. The funds will go to the districts which need it the most.

The Department has no formal requests for state aid, because for more than a year no advance funds have been available.

"The several informal requests which we have had could only be answered by suggesting that the schools borrow money against future state aid payments," Polley said. "This is becoming more difficult and is expensive for school districts because borrowing entails considerable interest payments in some cases and the money paid in interest is money not available for other education costs."

"The \$20 million isn't going to be a cure-all for poorer districts by any means but it will, for some, make an extremely critical difference because for most districts every dollar counts," Polley said.

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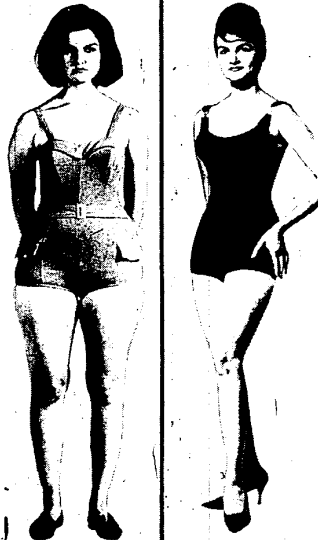
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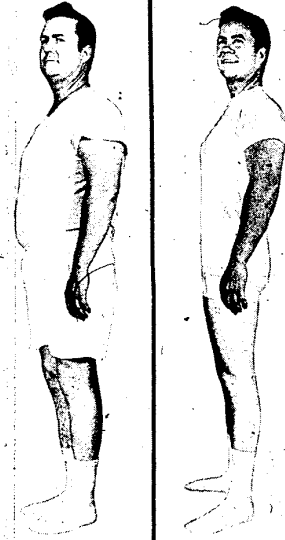
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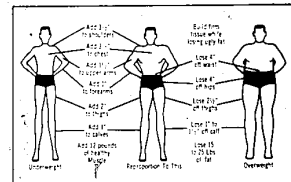
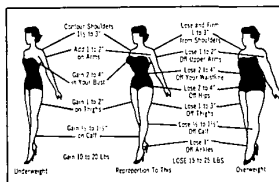


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