



I'd Rather Be Right

By Samuel Grafton

A delegation of eight Republican Senators has been in to see President Truman, and to offer him support. Let's ask a child's question about the incident: "Papa, what is 'support'?"

Support must have content; it must be support for something, and about something. Otherwise it is not support at all, it is merely a generalized expression of good will, such as prize fighters offer when they shake hands before a bout; but they don't support each other. The Republicans, led by Senator Taft, have shown an amiable intention in calling on the new President; their visit is most important; but until they outline the nature of their support in programmatic terms, what they have said will remain an unfinished sentence. There can be no such thing as support in a vacuum.

A Week Not to Be Wasted

One begins to understand why President Truman made such a point, at his last Tuesday press conference, of coming out for Bretton Woods, all the way, and for extension of the reciprocal trade treaties. Nobody had asked him what he thought of these matters. He brought them up himself, he committed himself thoroughly in the presence of 348 correspondents. He seemed quite anxious to sew himself up.

He knew that last week would be a week of general expressions of support, a week not to be wasted; and perhaps he strove, by committing himself early, to give content to these expressions of support, to make them a little less vague than otherwise they would be. At least the delegations would know what manner of man they had come in to shake hands with, and could not later say that they had not known.

Days of Grace

It happens that Mr. Truman did receive magnificent support from a Republican Senator last week. It came from a Senator who was not even on the Taft delegation: Aiken, of Vermont, who in a speech to the Upper House called on Republicans to get behind Bretton Woods, the reciprocal trade treaties, and all other pending international economic agreements. This would have been support even if Mr. Aiken had finished off his speech by remarking that he, personally, did not like Mr. Truman very much; and in this we see illustrated the difference between solid support and the mere flicking of a bit of dust from a new President's sleeve.

A curious, delicate, almost hidden battle is going on in Washington: the Battle of the Hundred Days, those days of grace, which America, by sound political instinct, gives to every new President. The accession of a new President has had an important effect on every treaty and agreement now pending before Congress. Defeat for these treaties now means the visible shattering of our national unity, as well as of our relations with the world. It was true before, but because there is a new man in the White House, it is clearer now, that rejection of pending treaties means to smash something at home as well as abroad.