

## **The Boswell Amendment And The People's Fight**

**T**HE legal fight which is about to develop in Alabama against what is known as that state's Boswell Amendment demands far more than the passing interest of American citizens in every part of the country who are conscious of the indispensable value of their civil liberties.

For indeed, the outcome of the planned court test of the validity of the amendment may further point to the vulnerability or invulnerability of democracy itself.

This amendment, frankly designed to prevent Negroes from voting in Alabama, and adopted in a statewide referendum in 1946, should it withstand the onslaught to which it is certain to be subjected in the courts, will prove to be the precipice from which colored Americans in the South will be pushed back fifty years in their righteous aspirations for the attainment of full citizenship.

What is more, the threat to political freedom which is inherent in this apparently innocuous amendment is not confined to the Negro. The latitude given county registrars in applying the educational qualifications test to prospective voters provides a device which, if approved by the courts, might conceivably be adopted by any state, North or South, to perpetuate political rule of one group over another, irrespective of race.

It is too much to conclude that even in Alabama the so-called literacy test as provided for in the Boswell Amendment would be impartially applied as to white applicants for voting registration, let alone Negro applicants. It might all depend upon which political faction, church, lodge, or business group, the prospective voter belonged to, as to whether he read and explained any section of the Constitution to the satisfaction of the registrars.

That a law like this, containing as it does such an ominous threat to their own civil liberties, was ever adopted by the people of Alabama shows how blindly southerners will plunge themselves into the political abyss just to "keep the Negro in his place."

The Boswell Amendment contains a serious threat to democratic government throughout this country, and the fight to abolish it is the people's fight.