

Toward Freedom

THE aged biological organism labeled Ellison D. Smith ceased living last Friday. It must have been a pretty good specimen, judging from its 80 years of continuous operation. No doubt it will now contribute toward enriching the soil of the ancestral Smith plantation in the appropriately named town of Lynchburg, S. C. But all this is of little concern to us here.

The outmoded political mountebank who gloried in the name "Cotton Ed" Smith had already died the previous week—on Nov. 7, to be exact. This political entity was also a hardy thing, having functioned in the Senate for 36 years, longer than any other. But the sovereign voters of South Carolina decreed that his blatant demagoguery and evil purposes should no longer pollute the political life of our country and hold back the progress of the people. And this is of tremendous concern to us here.

The recent political death of Cotton Ed Smith came as the culmination of a process that began long ago—when for the first time since Reconstruction, there emerged to the leadership of our nation a government dedicated to the interests of the common man. That government began to raise the living



By Doxey Wilkerson

standards and increase the educational opportunities of the people, even the sorely oppressed white and Negro people of South Carolina.

THIS new federal Administration introduced programs which hastened the process of industrialization and urbanization in the South, at the same time moving vigorously toward agricultural reform and improvement in the quality of rural life. It also fostered the growth of organized labor in the traditionally anti-labor South. Worse still, it introduced the new federal policy of "no discrimination because of race," and even tried to enforce it in South Carolina.

These were among the basic ailments from which Cotton Ed Smith and his political ilk began seriously to suffer back in the 1930's. The very foundation of the white supremacy-polltax-states rights system which had so long sustained their Bourbon South in power and kept the southern masses in subjection was in process of disintegration.

The author of this new federal program, President Roosevelt, did not restrict himself to indirect attacks upon the tory oligarchy which ruled the South, but he set out in 1938 to campaign directly against the reelection of several of the most blatant southern reaction-

The Smiths Are Dying Out

aries, including Cotton Ed Smith. There are those who interpreted Cotton Ed's return to the Senate after this most difficult political battle as a defeat for the President. But they looked only at the surface. They did not see the underlying new and progressive southern political movement which the President was then bringing into being, and which now, even though still immature, is yielding such magnificent results.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, still anxious about the domestic implications of the Roosevelt electoral victory it helped to achieve, comments that pro-Roosevelt Governor Olin Johnson, who failed to defeat Smith in 1938, was able to win this time only because he "campaigns as an opponent of the New Deal." We suspect, however, that the Times is whistling in the dark, frightened at this demonstration of popular support for the progressive Roosevelt policies which are beginning to break through the traditional crust of southern oppression and open up vistas of new life for the people.

It was an acute case of Rooseveltitis that killed Ed Smith. And it is important to note that he is but the last of a long line of kindred enemies of the people who have recently been retired from public life in the South—and that more are sure to go.

The Cotton Ed Smiths are dying out. For this, let us all give special thanks on Thursday.