



**Mary McGrory**

## Sen. Hart Shifts the Ground, Puts Life Into Rights Hearing

WASHINGTON—The Negro spiritual goes: "Everybody talkin' 'bout Heaven. Ain't going there—Heaven." Well, they were talking about Heaven at, of all places, the civil rights hearing before the Senate Commerce Committee. And because one was a liberal Democratic senator from Michigan and the other was the segregationist governor of Alabama they couldn't agree on whether in paradise there would be separate but equal facilities for the races.

Gov. Wallace struck the celestial chord first and later obviously wished he hadn't.

The pugnacious, pug-nosed governor had had a happy morning twanging out easy answers to easy questions played to him by like-minded Sen. Thurmond, Democrat of South Carolina.

"Governor," asked the senator, "Do you believe in equal opportunity for all men, be they white, black or tan?"

"Of course I do," the governor came in. And then his thoughts, you might say, soared.

"I am not one of these intellectuals who thinks there is no God," he said with pride.

"I think there is one and in fact I know there is one. I believe he made the whole human family and he loves all mankind, and any man who would mistreat anyone on account of his color, I feel sorry for them."

Any other man would have said "amen" to that, but Sen. Hart is highly unconventional and he promptly put to Wallace the most arresting question yet heard in the repetitious hearings.

"What will Heaven be like? Will it be segregated?"

Wallace was plainly shocked.

"I don't think that you or I, either one, knows exactly what

Heaven will be like," he said reprovingly.

The governor had for two days been freely predicting what would happen here if the Senate passed the civil rights bill. He had admonished the Defense department to look away from Dixie. He had prophesied a white uprising and the end of the free enterprise system.

But Hart's shifting of the ground to the hereafter put him off. His code does not permit him to speculate, as Hart invited him to do, about the eating facilities in Heaven, provided the human family does eat in eternity.

He said stiffly he thought that segregation on earth was in the best interests of both races.

If Hart nettled the governor with his theology, he confused him with his open-mindedness.

He admitted he didn't know something, which Wallace would never do. He said he didn't know what a Negro parent would do if he were a member of the Armed Forces who had grown up in the North and were assigned to the South and had to explain local conditions to his children.

Hart asked to be excused for further civil rights duty downstairs in the auditorium where a large crowd and the Senate Judiciary Committee, of which he is also a member, had gathered to hear the attorney general. After some inaudible exchanges about whether the Southern senators should be heard first, it was decided that Mr. Kennedy should go back to the Justice department while the committee heard the views of Sen. Ervin, Democrat of North Carolina.

Hart came through loud and clear on the auditorium's chancy amplifying system. He said: "We came closer to disaster in Birmingham than in Cuba."

If he keeps up the performance of the past week, Hart may prove that a man need be neither a windbag nor a demagogue to make a name for himself in the troubled field of civil rights.