

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

The Next Lynching

We reprint nearby the full text of questions that have been sent by the Senate Judiciary Committee to Clarence Thomas, President Bush's nominee to fill a vacant seat on the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington. We of course are not on the committee staff's routing list, but the document was forwarded to us by a relatively unconcerned recipient, appalled by a fishing expedition offending standards of fair play.

Mr. Thomas is extraordinarily well qualified to serve as a federal appeals judge. A graduate of Yale Law School, he understands the way the modern federal government works, perhaps the most important qualification for the D.C. circuit. He has worked with the U.S.'s civil-rights laws for more than a decade and knows their oppor-

Employment Opportunity Commission in the Reagan administration.

The Lynch Team. The team was put together by Nan Aron of the Alliance for Justice, which this summer prepared the set of charges against Mr. Thomas. The Judiciary Committee document reflects her charges.

The Lynch Team will be quarter-backed by Joe Biden, who has led his team to its current level of fame. Offensive coordinator for Mr. Biden will be Diana Huffman, chief committee counsel. At Mr. Biden's side will be Lynch Team veterans Ted Kennedy and Howard Metzenbaum.

Background: The history of this event can be summed up in three words: Bork, Lucas and Marshall.

Mr. Thomas has been nominated to fill the appeals-court vacancy created



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tunities and limits; he is sometimes assailed for his views on quotas and affirmative action, which are the views of the Supreme Court. His judicial philosophy is conservative, like other Bush judicial appointees.

Mr. Thomas is being singled out for the kind of scrutiny displayed alongside for one reason and one reason only. He is black.

In a world of normal morality and justice, his nomination to this high position would be seen widely as a source of great pride to all black Americans. He would be the first black named to the Washington appeals court in a decade. But he has a double handicap: He is both black and conservative. So, as we suspect is clear to anyone who spends time in the agate type nearby, Mr. Thomas, like William Lucas before him, is being prepared for a political lynching.

Stringing up the political careers of innocent men and women has become such a community event in Washington, that we have decided to preview this one as a sporting event, a kind of grotesque Washington entertainment.

Place: The U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing Room.

Time: Early February.

Participants: Clarence Thomas, the former chairman of the Equal

when Robert Bork resigned his seat after the Lynch Team finished with his nomination to serve on the Supreme Court.

Lucas is William Lucas, who was nominated by Mr. Bush to be Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. Like Clarence Thomas, Mr. Lucas is a black conservative, and therefore had to be wiped out, lest other uppity blacks start to leave the Liberal Plantation.

Finally, the Thomas nomination goes beyond one appeals-court seat. Many think that if Justice Thurgood Marshall leaves the Supreme Court, President Bush might want to nominate a Judge Thomas.

Analysis: Keeping Mr. Thomas off the appeals bench may not be easy. The allegations center on a supposed failure to bring age-discrimination cases at the EEOC. Agency figures show a rapid increase in these cases under Mr. Thomas. Also, some civil-rights groups are silently or quietly supporting Mr. Thomas. They may be growing edgy about being associated with another assault by white politicians on an accomplished black.

Betting Line: The odds are 2-1 that Mr. Thomas will be approved for the court. On whether he will be trashed in the process, there is no book.