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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE ROLE OF THE DIXIECRATS IN THE 1948 ELECTION

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

ANN MATHISON McLAURIN

Norman, Oklahoma

1972

THE ROLE OF THE DIXIECRATS IN THE 1948 ELECTION

APPROVED BY

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PREFACE

The political history of the South can be characterized by the region's determination to prevent blacks from exercising their political rights. Southern politicians in their continuous efforts to limit black participation in politics have inadvertently allowed the blacks to exert a much greater influence than any other minority would ordinarily have exerted. It would be difficult if not impossible to point to a period in southern history when blacks, whether slave or free, did not exert a noticeable influence in southern political decisions. Not only have politics been molded by the blacks, but the social and economic ideas have similarly been influenced.

Of the numerous political adventures designed by southerners who were bent on excluding blacks from enjoying full citizenship privileges, none was more typical than that of the Dixiecrats. Created as a regional party this group of southerners sought to redirect the course of the Democratic party. While many southerners had long been dissatisfied with the increasing centralization trend exhibited by the federal government, the civil rights message of President Harry Truman was the primary factor that

caused them to break with the party and run their own presidential candidate.

This work is an attempt to trace the origin, development and actions of the Dixiecrat party with emphasis on its role in the 1948 presidential election. While this election has received considerable attention by historians attempting to explain Harry Truman's upset victory, little has been written concerning the right wing bolt from the Democratic party. By exploring this area, the election results are more understandable. The nature of the Dixiecrat party further illuminates southern conservatism and its role in American political history. Since this right wing conservatism is still evident today, a close review of it at an earlier stage of its growth may serve to explain some of the politics of extremism that exist today.

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THE ROLE OF THE DIXIECRATS IN THE 1948 ELECTION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For a major part of the period since the Civil War the South has been solidly Democratic. "The South" as the term is used in this study refers to the eleven former Confederate states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

The origin of the "Solid South" can be traced to the pre-Civil War days. In the ante-bellum South the aristocrats, big planters, and slaveholders, tended to belong to the Whig party while the small farmers supported Andrew Jackson and the Democratic party. The issue of the extension of slavery into the territories, however, gave rise to the Republican party in 1854. When the Whig party, weakened by internal dissension over sectional issues, began to decline, the Republican party arose in the election of 1856 to replace it as the opposition party to the Democrats. Meanwhile the Democratic party, also divided over the extension of slavery into the territories, split into

northern and southern wings. In the 1860 nominating convention the southern delegates, like the Dixiecrats of 1948, withdrew and nominated their own candidate, John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky, for President. Again, though, like the Dixiecrats, the southern dissenters of 1860 failed to alter the election results and the newly-formed Republican party won the election. After the demise of the Whig party, its former members made several futile attempts to create a third party but most eventually though reluctantly joined the ranks of their former enemies, the Democrats.

By the end of the Civil War all "respectable southerners" were Democrats. To be a Republican was to a traditional Southerner tantamount to treason. Such an individual was immediately suspect to his neighbors and was in all likelihood ostracized from his community. Not only had the Republican party defeated the South during the war, but following the war it sought to impose its rule on the South. Much bitterness developed over issues such as the lot of the freedmen. As northern Republicans insisted that political equality be accorded to the blacks, southerners banded together more strongly than ever to resist such moves. White southerners, feeling their way of life threatened, rallied to the Democratic party in ever-increasing numbers, thus the Democratic party became a refuge for southern white supremists. The Negro was not

only the key to the creation of the one-party South but was the very heart of southern politics. Although southern politics is sometimes referred to as a politics of cotton, free trade, agrarian poverty or planter and aristocrat, it is in actuality a politics of race.[1]

Just as the dominant theme in the South during Reconstruction was a fear of the Negro, stories about Reconstruction shaped the opinions of many southerners who dutifully passed those attitudes on to future generations. From the southern point of view the Reconstruction era was a dismal time for the South; it was a period during which evil, power-seeking scoundrels dominated the political process. In the South, according to this thesis, scalawags, carpetbaggers, and radical Republicans, who were totally incompetent and thoroughly corrupt, dominated the various state governments. These elements elevated the illiterate blacks to positions of control, then, using them as puppets, proceeded to treat white Southerners as a conquered people. These conditions which "forced decent" white Southerners to unite in a single party in hopes of saving southern civilization were in large part responsible for the rise of the one-party South.

While this negative stereotype of Congressional reconstruction is inaccurate, it is true that many

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[1]Vladimir Key and Alexander Heard, Southern Politics in State and Nation (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), p. 5. Hereinafter referred to as Key, Southern Politics.

government officials were ignorant and unscrupulous. Tax rates surged upward as did state debts while many carpet-bag officials quickly acquired fortunes. For example, Henry Clay Warmoth, governor of Louisiana, in 1868, while being paid a salary of $8,000 made $100,000 the first year. Corruption of this sort, however, was not confined to the South but was a national phenomenon.[2] Nonetheless such incidents reinforced the many myths concerning Reconstruction that were propagated in the South years after Reconstruction ended. One of the more persistent myths, that Negroes ruling in the South were responsible for the corruption that existed, was untrue. In the first place blacks did not rule alone for none of the radical governments contained a Negro majority. Negroes controlled neither both houses of any state legislature nor the governor's mansion of any state. Important governmental offices held by blacks were few: there was only one state supreme court justice, two United States Senators, and fifteen Congressmen.

Another popular idea held tenaciously by southerners was that nothing constructive was accomplished by the radical governments. Contrary to this notion, many positive and lasting accomplishments can be attributed to these

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[2]Thomas D. Clark and Albert D. Kirwin, The South Since Appomattox: A Century of Regional Change (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 37. Hereinafter referred to as Clark, The South.

governments. They encouraged public education, court, county, and tax reforms, and advocated political and social equality for blacks and whites alike. Although many recent studies have rejected a negative interpretation of Reconstruction, they have made no imprint whatsoever on the majority of southerners who are either unaware of them or simply dismiss such views as Yankee propaganda. In spite of the accomplishments of the period, Reconstruction was a traumatic experience for the South. The racial bitterness aroused at that time continued to deprive the Negro of his civil, economic, social, and political rights. And as Reconstruction ended, the two primary goals of white southerners, terminating Negro power and ridding the region of foreign control, were achieved. To maintain this status quo of white solidarity supportive myths and legends were kept alive.[3]

Alongside the harsh and mythical southern view of Reconstruction, there arose during the postwar days the myth of the ante-bellum golden age. As C. Vann Woodward, leading southern historian, describes it, "one of the most significant inventions of the New South was the 'Old South' --a new idea in the eighties, and a legend of incalculable

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[3]C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913, Vol. IX of A History of the South, ed. by Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter (10 vols.; Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), p. 51. Hereinafter referred to as Woodward, The New South.

potentialities."[4] The "Lost Cause" was celebrated by newspaper accounts of Confederate heroes, by the erection of statues in memory of the war dead, the organizing of Confederate Veterans and the Daughters of the Confederacy, and by fictional writers of both the North and South. By glorifying the old South, realities were forgotten and white southerners were tied even more closely together. The myth makers ignored the varieties of ways of life that existed, portraying all white southerners as aristocrats. In reality, of course, only the few were cultured and wealthy in sharp contrast to the backward and uneducated majority who suffered from severe economic and cultural deprivations.

The leaders--sometimes called redeemers or bourbons --of the New South perpetuated these myths in hopes of strengthening their positions of influence. They were usually merchants, bankers, railroadmen, and lawyers--industrialists rather than agrarians. While pretending to champion free trade, the legend of the Lost Cause and states' rights, they actually supported subsidies for railroads and tax exemptions and special privileges for industries. The small farmers knew that these leaders did not represent their interests but still fear of the Negro demanded white unity.

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[4] Ibid., pp. 154-55.

The Bourbons, aware of this fear, capitalized upon it to abort incipient revolts from the Democratic party. From the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century the South voted Democratic nearly all the time. In the period 1876-1944 only two of the southern states voted Republican twice in presidential elections. Florida voted Republican in 1866 and 1928, and Tennessee voted Republican once during the period; South Carolina and Louisiana in 1876; North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia in 1928. Four states, Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, and Mississippi maintained a straight Democratic voting record for the whole period.[5]

Despite the voting record, cleavages in the South did exist. Major differences between the "Black-Belt gentry and hillbilly commoners" were evident.[6] With the termination of Reconstruction, independent movements breaking away from the Democratic party occurred in many of the southern states. As early as 1880 a series of "Independent" movements, manifestations of agrarian discontent, had begun to spread throughout the southern states. Although the Greenback party, advocating soft money, had appeared in 1876, most others had been too concerned at that time with the main parties to take note of their program. Later numerous debtors in the South found the Greenback soft

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[5]Key, Southern Politics, p. 10.

[6]Woodward, The New South, pp. 76-76.

money policy appealing and by the 1878 elections sent fifteen Greenbackers to Congress. Soft money, however, was not the only issue which fostered southern Independent movements. Independents had espoused a liberal program of equality and suffrage for the blacks and called for an end to the corruption which often involved the overturning of whole elections.

With the rise of Independent movements in the South new hope came to the almost defunct Republican party. To meet this challenge the Democrats raised the familiar cry of "white supremacy" and "party regularity."[7] The possibility of an Independent-Republican fusion loomed large reviving the fear of a renewed radical program in the South, a factor that alone was sufficient to defeat the coalition. With the return of prosperity in 1879, Greenbackism began to decline only to be replaced by a new soft-money panacea known as free silver. This issue was capitalized upon by a new political party, the Populists. Formally launched in 1891 as a combination of southern and western farmers and laborers, the Populists called for fair elections, graduated income tax, prohibition of child labor, expansion of public education, an improved system of roads, a revamping of the tax system, a ten-hour work day and an expansion of the currency.[8] Southern planters

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[7]Clark, The South, p. 66. [8]Ibid., p. 70.

who had supported the farmer's earlier organization, the Alliance, now joined with industrial and financial urban groups in opposition to the new party. The Populist party by and large attracted members from the lower economic and social classes. This seeming split in the Democratic ranks brought the threat of "Negro domination" to life once again.

To be a Populist, however, involved changing political parties. This might well mean in the 1890's "a falling-off of clients, the loss of a job, of credit at the store, or of one's welcome at church."[9] Nonetheless the existence of the Populist party was not only a challenge to the one-party system of the New South but a threat to the racial relations as well, for Populists addressed themselves to a most difficult and dangerous task--the union of black and white farmers. While enjoying only limited success in this endeavor, they did, at the outset, make repeated efforts to gain equality for the blacks. In the election of 1892, when Democrats bought great numbers of black votes, many Populists became disillusioned with Negroes, some to the point of becoming anti-Negro.[10]

By 1896 the Populist program was incorporated into the Democratic platform thus sealing the fate of the new third party. Although the South remained Democratic, the complexion of the party had been forced to acquire a more

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[9]Woodward, The New South, p. 244.

[10]Ibid., p. 352.

progressive look. The decline of Populism also marked the retirement of many of the "Bourbons" and sent the masses of its supporters to fill the progressive wing of the Democratic party. Many Populists, who attributed their defeat to the selling of black votes to the Democrats, were now uniting with the planters to remove legally the blacks from politics through a scheme based on the Mississippi Plan. This movement legitimized practices long used in the South and particularly in Mississippi. It required that in order for the Negro to vote he must meet a residence requirement, pay a poll tax four to nine months in advance of voting, be free of having committed certain crimes, and pass a literacy test. The Negro was legally disfranchised, yet when his vote was needed by those in control he would be allowed to vote.[11] As a result the Negro could not exercise a direct influence on politics, but because he remained a threat to white supremacy, he remained the hidden but dominant factor. At the turn of the century then the Negro emerged clearly as the determining factor in southern political history. Since no major issue would be decided apart from him he was "the one and only factor that preserved the one-party system."[12]

As the progressive movement of the early 20th century reached the South, reforms were made but not for the Negro. The establishment of the primary which allowed the

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[11] Clark, The South, p. 77. [12] Ibid., p. 105.

masses a choice of candidates carefully excluded black participation by requiring party membership in order to vote. Since blacks could not be party members, they could not vote in the primary, which in the South was actually the election since the Republican opposition was always nominal at most.

Tied to the limited main goal of smothering the black and his role as citizen, the Southern political national leadership declined in quality. With a Democratic but unsophisticated electorate, politicians found oratorical talent coupled with racism a formula for success. Impassioned racist pleas to preserve white supremacy appealed to the masses of southerners, thus opening the way for the demogogues. Southern demogogues, typically portrayed as insincere opportunists without moral or political principles, were frequently conscientious social reformers. Often strong and colorful, many such individuals were interested in the social reforms that had been left undone by the conservative redeemers.

Although some of these politicians were race baiters and charlatans, most worked for the welfare of their constituents. James K. Vardaman, the governor of Mississippi sometimes known as the "Great White Chief," made such reforms as ending convict leasing and increasing common school appropriations and teachers' salaries.[13] Vardaman's

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[13] Ibid., p. 122.

successor, Theodore Bilbo, though a racist of questionable moral character, achieved important tax reforms.[14] Ben Tillman and Cole Blease, both ex-governors of Mississippi, Ellison D. "Cotton Ed" Smith, Senator from South Carolina, and Tom Watson, Senator from Georgia, were some other of the better known southern demogogues. Huey P. Long, the most extraordinary of all the so-called demogogues, relied not on the race baiting theme of his fellow southern politicians, but on the planning and accomplishment of his social and economic program which included improvement of public highways, public education, the building of state hospitals, aid to the poor, pensions for the aged, and shorter working hours. Sheared of their racism many of these men might have been ranked with the nation's leading progressives.[15]

While Progressives scught reforms on all levels of government, Republicans sought to make their party acceptable to the South. Intellectuals and industrialists who longed for the return of the two-party system to the south encouraged the "lily-white" movement in Republican ranks. This was an effort to minimize the role of the Negro in hopes of its being attractive to white southerners. Theodore Roosevelt, vacillating in his attitude toward the "lily white" movement in the South, appointed southern Democrats to office but when it became apparent that this

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[14] Ibid., p. 123.

[15] Ibid., p. 121.

endangered his control over Negro delegates to the Republican convention, he reversed his stand. When southerners heard of Roosevelt's invitation to Booker T. Washington for dinner, his southern strategy was lost. William Howard Taft successfully revived Roosevelt's "lily-white" program initially but lost the South when he supported the Payne-Aldrich tariff, a high protective tariff which the South saw as a betrayal to their economic interests.

In 1912 the Democrats finally succeeded in capturing the presidential election of 1912 with a southerner, Woodrow Wilson. With his election the South again found itself represented in such national offices as cabinet positions, ambassadorial appointments, the supreme court, and committees in the Senate and the House.[16]

With the end of the first World War the South experienced a period of expansion in industry and urbanization. Along with this was a growing class consciousness and a budding labor movement which appeared as an ominous sign to many. The Bolshevik revolution and the experiences of the war caused many Americans to have an exaggerated fear of alien ideologies and movements. To protect the United States from the communist threat, various laws restricting individual freedom were passed. As the public became increasingly fearful of threats against its system, it entered a period of national hysteria known as the Red

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[16] Ibid., pp. 130-32.

Scare. Anyone who advocated change or deviated in the slightest from the "American way" was treated as a potentially disloyal citizen.

In the South this era of social unrest gave rise to a new Ku Klux Klan not limited to the South but particularly strong in that region. At its peak of strength in 1925, the Klan controlled in varying degrees the governments of Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, California, Oregon, Indiana, and Ohio. Excesses credited to the Klan, however, marked the beginning of its decline. Outside the South the Klan's major appeal was anti-Catholicism, a prejudice emphasized when the Democrats nominated Alfred E. Smith of New York, a Catholic and a wet, for the presidency. The Democratic candidate presented southern voters with a real dilemma. Smith's background and personal beliefs along with a seemingly radical program were all the things that the South despised. On the other hand, Herbert Hoover, the Republican candidate, a dry and a Protestant, genuinely appealed to the South. Many southerners solved their dilemma by becoming "anti-Smith Democrats," that is, by voting Democratic on the state level and not voting at all for the presidency.

This presidential contest of 1928 resulted in breaking the Solid South for the first time since 1876. Hoover carried Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, and Texas. Only Arkansas, the home state of Joseph Robinson,

Smith's vice-presidential candidate, and the deep South remained loyal to the party. According to Vladimir Key's state-by-state analysis, the white voters in the counties of the black belt areas of the South remained most loyal to the Democratic ticket. Conversely, the counties with few blacks were the very areas which shifted to Hoover. Mississippi and South Carolina, the two southern states with the largest proportion of blacks, were the states where Hoover won his lowest votes. The significance of the 1928 southern bolt to the Republican party is that the counties with a heavy black population remained loyal to the Democrats, partly because of tradition and partly because they feared that the Republicans might alter the status of the southern Negro. Whites outside the black belt could now vote according to their principles with regard to the other issues such as religion and prohibition rather than on the Negro factor alone.[17]

Hoover's victory warned that southerners would no longer support just any candidate who happened to run under the Democratic banner. Furthermore, this election revealed that the Republican party was no longer radical but had indeed become conservative. Its strength lay in the rural areas of the North and West while the Democrats derived the bulk of their support from urban areas. The Democrats, as a consequence, had become increasingly

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[17]Key, Southern Politics, p. 318.

liberal. Since the South was rural and conservative, it could fit well into the Republican mold except for tradition and their fear of the Negro. From 1928-1944 the South would be Democratic in presidential elections but would gradually drift further and further away from the Democratic ideology. Meanwhile the northern wing of the Democratic party, the base of its national power turned increasingly toward attaining the black, the foreign, and the labor vote.[18]

With the breaking of the Solid South in 1928 many southerners prematurely prophesied that the era of the one-party South was ending. But these optimists failed to understand the embedded fear that southerners harbored in regard to black rule. Also the depression of 1929 contributed to the defeat of Republican resurgence in the South, an area as hard hit by the depression as was any other region of the country. Because of the extreme economic distress of the 1930's the Republican vote of the South reached an all time low. Since Hoover and Republicanism had become the symbol of the depression, the South was again solidly in the Democratic column voting for Roosevelt whom they saw as the only alternative to a complete national breakdown.

Although some southerners had initially opposed Roosevelt, some including Senator Huey P. Long of Louisiana

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[18] Ibid., pp. 318-29.

and John Nance Garner of Texas--ultimately the vice-presidential nominee for the Democrats--supported him. Cordell Hull, senator from Tennessee and one of Roosevelt's chief links to the South, bound other influential southerners such as Pat Harrison of Mississippi and Harry Byrd of Virginia to him. Without the support of these important southern leaders and the people of the South, Roosevelt could not have been elected.[19]

Perhaps Roosevelt's rural background combined with the urgency of the depression masked the similarities between the programs of Roosevelt and Smith. Roosevelt's summer home at Warm Springs, Georgia, gave him a special understanding of the problems of the South. Southern people, especially the Georgians who had witnessed his struggle with polio, greatly admired him. Furthermore, many southerners had viewed Roosevelt's innovations in New York during his tenure as Governor as evidence of his willingness to experiment with new ideas and could therefore conclude that as President he would be able to cope with the problems of the depression.[20] As President, Franklin D. Roosevelt promised a New Deal for all classes and regions of the country. Roosevelt believed that if the nation were to survive the depression, massive

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[19]Frank Friedel, F. D. R. and the South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), pp. 35, 46-47.

[20]Ibid.

governmental intervention and aid would be necessary. To distribute this aid to those in need, a whole host of agencies was created.

Relief supplied by the New Deal was openly welcomed by the South at first. The implementation, however, of the New Deal in the South eventually brought about some ambivalent reactions because New Deal government planning and regulation ran counter to the states' rights doctrine of the South. Still, southerners realized that their region was in dire need of the aid that such governmental programs could extend to them, and southern congressmen, many of whom held key positions in the 1930's supported this series of welfare measures. To meet the grave economic situation caused by the depression, other congressmen, perhaps victims of the personal charm of the President, were also persuaded to support his program whole heartedly.[21]

The success or failure of the New Deal in the South varied widely according to the type of program and the specific area in question. The National Industrial Recovery Act, though generally unenforceable, aided some of the hardest hit southern industries. It suggested the abolition of child labor and encouraged wage supports and maximum working hours. Many southern laborers were given the opportunity of working under these labor codes. To the

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[21] Ibid.

South the Agricultural Adjustment Administration which limited production, meant an increase in the price of cotton, grain, and cattle.[22] It was the landowner, however, and not the tenant, who was the prime benefactor of this program. When Roosevelt became aware of the inequities of the program, he made plans to alter it in such a way as to aid the tenant farmer and the sharecropper. But nullification of the whole program by the Supreme Court in 1935 ended this effort. In the meantime, the landowners felt favorably disposed toward the Roosevelt Administration.

The Works Progress Administration, Civilian Conservation Corps, and National Youth Administration provided work relief for the South. The rural South received the benefits of electricity: some by the Tennessee Valley Authority and others by the Rural Electric Association. In summation, the effectiveness of the New Deal programs varied from gross mismanagement to efficient progressive improvement.

After the immediate economic crisis had passed, southerners slowly began to realize that the New Deal was a threat to the traditions and institutions of the South. Although the philosophy of the New Deal was completely capitalistic and its welfare state an insurance to the idea of private property, opponents often charged socialism.

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[22] Ibid., pp. 62-63.

The New Deal measures consisting of a strongly centralized national government seemed to be displacing the revered southern notion of states' rights.

Furthermore, the growing liberalism of the New Deal with its appeal to the southern sharecropper, the laborer, and the Negro alarmed influential states' rights groups. Southern congressmen who had supported the economic programs of the New Deal now had strong reservations concerning the social implications of New Deal ideology. After 1936 many farmers began criticizing the WPA programs for increasing their labor costs while many other farmers lost their farms when the overproduction of cotton caused prices to drop. A dichotomy in the voting habits of southern congressmen became clearly discernible as they supported farm measures such as price supports and subsidies but opposed labor legislation, social security, the WPA, and black equality.[23]

Until 1936 no one dared openly to oppose Roosevelt. But in January, 1936, a wealthy Texas lumberman, John H. Kirby and his group, the Southern Committee to Uphold the Constitution, held a "Grass Roots Convention" in Macon, Georgia. The purpose of this meeting was to coalesce opponents of New Dealism and possibly give impetus to a Talmadge for President boom. Eugene Talmadge, former Governor of Georgia, had begun criticizing the centralization

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[23]Clark, The South, p. 240.

trends of the New Deal.[24] Members of this group sent invitations to "Jeffersonian Democrats" and states' rights advocates in seventeen southern states, but the outcome was a disappointment when the meeting failed in its objective of placing anti-New Deal men in key offices in southern states. For example, in the Georgia election, E. D. Rivers defeated Talmadge for governor and Richard Russell was elected to the Senate. Both were Roosevelt men.

Another factor which alienated southerners from New Deal Democrats was the abolition of the two-thirds rule. At the 1936 Democratic Convention the two-thirds requirement necessary for nominating presidential candidates was abolished. Only a bare majority could now nominate, and so the South's veto power over the party's presidential candidates was seemingly ended. The "Jeffersonian Democrats," angered by this move, met again, this time in Detroit, to determine a course of action. They decided on an anti-Negro, anti-Communist platform and distributed separate electoral tickets in some of the states.[25] This action accomplished little other than showing dissatisfaction with the Democratic party. In spite of the differences

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[24]George B. Tindall, The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1946, Vol. X of A History of the South, ed. by Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter (10 vols.; Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), p. 616. Hereinafter referred to as Tindall, The Emergence of the New South.

[25]Ibid., p. 619.

of opinion Roosevelt had to depend upon southern committee chairmen in Congress to pass his legislation, and for the rest of the New Deal era, southern congressmen and Administration representatives struggled over new legislation.

As the New Deal changed from recovery to reform southerners began to take a more critical view of such programs as the Works Progress Administration, Social Security, the Wagner Act, the Housing Acts of 1937, and the Fair Labor Standards System of 1938. Stronger opposition crystallized as the economic situation improved. Governor Talmadge and other southerners became increasingly skeptical of the growing paternalism of the New Deal. When Roosevelt proposed to create jobs for the unemployed, he made sure that pay for this work would be above the amount offered by relief but lower than wages for other types of employment. Still critics charged that the programs were worthless, inefficient, and simply a means by which big government would gradually gain control of the labor force. The Social Security program, consisting of old-age and survivors' insurance, was also designed to implement the other relief operations. Critics viewed this program as un-American: it was highly "socialistic" in that it abolished the American ideals of individualism and personal responsibility. White southerners saw it as a system to which they would be paying for the upkeep of "indolent blacks." Low-cost housing projects were also advocated

by the Roosevelt administration. To Roosevelt this was a means of revitalizing the construction business and related industries. Congressmen from rural areas frequently opposed the bills on grounds that in addition to being socialistic and financially irresponsible, it would primarily benefit northern industrial centers, not rural areas. The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, establishing a minimum wage and a maximum work week with time-and-a-half for overtime, also aroused opposition. Some critics viewed it as a conspiracy by which President Roosevelt hoped further to increase his own power. Since the South had long paid lower wages than the North, northern businessmen wanted the act to rid them of the cheap-labor competitors of the South. Southerners opposed any bill that might lead to non-discriminatory pay for all jobs performed.[26]

Many from the South viewed the New Deal as a threat to the constitutional basis of the United States. Roosevelt himself caused a constitutional crisis when he failed to estimate the amount of furor that his court packing bill would provoke. Dismayed at the ease with which the Supreme Court was cutting away at New Deal legislation, Roosevelt decided to "pack the court" according to his own tastes.

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[26]William E. Leuctenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, in The American Nation Series ed. by Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 124-37, 262-65.

Southerners saw at stake the fundamentals of the Constitution and particularly states' rights.[27] Southerners like Carter Glass of Virginia feared that should Roosevelt be granted powers to enlarge the court he might appoint political friends who had ideas similar to those of Harold Ickes. Ickes who had repeatedly denounced the South's segregated school system and others with such alien philosophies might well reverse the entire direction of the court and undermine the sacred judicial decisions upon which southern society was based. However, Roosevelt's court plan was doomed to failure. Garner's compromise, which embodied the section concerning minor court reforms, was the final product of the court bill.[28]

Southern arguments questioning the constitutionality of the New Deal became increasingly prevalent. Many of these arguments, phrased in legal terms, were actually a cover for the emotional issue of race. Southerners knew that Roosevelt's aid to the poor meant aid to the blacks in the South. Similar aid to northern blacks would enable them to vote for the New Deal and more reform, a frightening prospect for most southern supporters of the status quo.[29]

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[27]Tindall, Emergence of the New South, p. 621.

[28]Ibid., pp. 619-23.

[29]Friedel, F. D. R. and the South, pp. 71-73.

Nevertheless, economic policies and increasing centralization of governmental agencies served to arouse actual southern opposition to Roosevelt more than did the issue of race. In the fall of 1937 Senator Byrd called a meeting of ten Democrats and Republicans for the purpose of opposing Roosevelt. This group sent out a ten-point "conservative manifesto" calling for revisions of taxes, a balanced budget, and a decreased role of the federal government in the economy and in the lives of individuals. It also called for more attention to be given to the rights of the states. Clearly a conservative bloc now existed but Roosevelt managed to get some measures through the session in 1938.[30]

In 1938 Franklin Roosevelt embarked upon his famous purge of the Democratic primaries in hopes of getting more progressive southerners in the party. Roosevelt believed that it was essential to the health of the nation that the economy of the South be strengthened by his liberal legislation. He undertook a tour through the nation emphasizing the Deep South during which he spoke in behalf of supporters of the Administration. He succeeded in eliminating only one opponent. Surprisingly enough, partially because of the economic recession and partially due to intra-party bickering, he did not alienate the South as a whole with these

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[30]Tindall, Emergence of the New South, pp. 624-25.

tactics, even though the outcome of the 1938 elections, with the election of anti-New Deal men, showed disapproval of the New Deal.[31]

It was the gravity of the world situation in 1940 that assured Roosevelt of his continued residence in Washington. Dissident Democrats earlier had dreams of substituting Garner for Roosevelt. By opposing various measures and actions of Roosevelt, Garner gradually became the symbolic head of the anti-New Deal group, giving substance to talk of Garner for President. In 1939 he announced himself as a contender for the Presidency, but all of Garner's hopes were dependent upon Roosevelt's decision not to seek a third term. At the convention when it became clear that the President would run, Roosevelt won the nomination with hardly a semblance of opposition. The South did, after all, approve of his foreign policy.

Although the Second World War delayed the burgeoning southern revolt, the South did balk at Roosevelt's 1940 vice-presidential choice, Henry A. Wallace of Iowa. Wallace denounced racism and was a devout liberal New Dealer. When Roosevelt threatened to withhold his candidacy if Wallace was not approved, most of the South gave in. However, some southerners from South Carolina, refusing to give in, formed the Jeffersonian Democratic party which supported Wendell Wilkie and the traditional principles of

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[31] Ibid., pp. 626-30.

the Democratic party. In Texas a similar No Third Term Democratic party appeared with Wilkie as their choice, but these moves were of little significance in the long run because Roosevelt carried both these states easily.[32]

With the congressional elections of 1942 there was a definite anti-New Deal trend nationwide and conservatives filled many of the vacancies. In January, 1943, when the new Congress convened, southern Democrats were rebelling. They proceeded to make assault after assault against the New Deal measures. Governor Frank Dixon of Alabama hinted at a third party of conservative southern composition. According to him, plans for a break with the Democratic party were in the air. Governor Sam Jones of Louisiana listed a series of southern grievances: war industries were centered in the North; freight-rate differentials were unfair to the South; federal money was poured into the North; and public housing went to the North. These complaints serve to illustrate that the South, while giving lip service to the ideal of states' rights and denouncing centralized government, really objected to centralization only when they were being excluded from the benefits of it.

At the Southern Governor's Conference in Tallahassee in the spring of 1943 the two Governors again hinted at insurgency.[33] It was not until 1944, however, that revolt within the Democratic party reached major proportions.

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[32] Ibid., pp. 692-94. [33] Ibid., pp. 724-25.

That year revolt flared openly in three states--Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas. In Mississippi, a slate of uninstructed electors was placed on the November ballot. The purpose was to get other southern states to follow suit and unite the southern electorate so they could gain control of the electoral college, thereby supplanting the old two-thirds rule. The Mississippi delegation denounced universal suffrage and civil rights. Still, the Mississippi delegates voted for the Democrats in the electoral college fourteen to one.[34] In South Carolina, the slate of electors appearing under the label "Southern Democrats," promoted Byrd for President.

It was in Texas, however, that the movement was of major importance. Brewing for a series of elections in Texas was a split between the left and right wings in the state Democratic party. This split became apparent in 1944 during the state May convention at which Texans traditionally name national convention delegates and presidential electors. In 1944 anti-Roosevelt men controlled the state convention thereby causing a third of those present to walk out and subsequently to hold a rump convention at which they named a conflicting set of delegates. At the national convention that summer both groups were seated splitting the Texas votes. When Roosevelt was named at

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[34]Thomas Sancton, "White Supremacy--Crisis or Plot?" The Nation, CLXVII (July 31, 1948), 125. Hereinafter referred to as Sancton, "White Supremacy."

the national convention, the Texas Regulars concentrated their opposition on Henry Wallace, who was far too liberal to suit them. Due to these southern pressures, Senator Harry Truman, of Missouri, considered by the South a border state man with conservative leanings, became the new vice-presidential nominee for the Democrats.[35]

At the September state convention, where Texans officially announced the outcome of the summer primaries and adopted a platform, pro-Roosevelt forces won control and named pro-Roosevelt electors. The Texas Supreme Court upheld this action. The right-wing electors, who were anti-Roosevelt but uncommitted otherwise, were listed as "Texas Regulars" on the general election ballot. This bolt by Texas Regulars in 1944 represented the first effort in recent history of any southern group to leave the national Democratic party without joining the Republican party.

In 1946 the Texas Regulars rejoined the Democratic party but maintained their right-wing point of view. Buford Jester, more moderate than several other hopefuls, was supported by the Texas Regulars for Governor.[36] Jester also had the support of some of the pro-Roosevelt Democrats who feared his opponent, Homer P. Rainey. Rainey, a

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[35]L. B. Wheildon, "The South and the Presidency," Editorial Research Report, XIV (March 24, 1948), 181.

[36]Key, Southern Politics, p. 257.

champion of academic freedom, had been fired from the presidency of the University of Texas in 1944 for being too radical and in 1946 made an unsuccessful bid for the governorship. Although Rainey was no radical, he was portrayed as one and this portrayal served to discredit other liberal candidates as well. The liberal-conservative camps in Texas that emerged in 1944, 1946, and 1948 followed a familiar line. The Texas Regulars were the most outspoken of Rainey's opponents in 1946 whereas the liberal leaders in 1948 had been Rainey men in 1946. In 1948 Congressman Lyndon Johnson, a liberal New Dealer, vied with Governor Coke Stevenson, a conservative, for the Senate. The conservative-liberal factions were clearly evident in this election which Johnson won by a mere eighty-seven votes.[37]

In the 1948 May convention the struggle over presidential electors was the exact opposite of the 1944 struggle. At this convention Truman electors were selected, forcing the conservatives to fight to control the September convention which hopefully would enable them to select electors who supported South Carolina's Senator Strom Thurmond. Their efforts, however, failed. The failure of conservative Texans to secure Thurmond electors indicated the degree of loyalty of one section of the South to the Democratic party. The liberal-conservative split in

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[37] Ibid., pp. 256-58.

Texas and the Texas Regular movement should have been studied more closely by the dissident southern leaders. It would have revealed the importance of controlling the party machinery of the state if a southern bolt was to be successful. Many southerners, it would be demonstrated later, would unquestioningly vote for the Democratic symbol, the rooster in the South, not for the man or ideology running under the emblem.[38]

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[38]Jasper Berry Shannon, Toward a New Politics in the South (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1949), p. 62; and Alexander Heard, A Two Party South? (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1952), pp. 158-59.

CHAPTER II

CIVIL RIGHTS

Discontent with the liberal direction in which the Democratic party was moving was rife within its ranks long before 1948. However, the economic depression followed by the continuing international crisis, served to muffle the dissatisfaction. The prospect of receiving federal patronage also provided an incentive for otherwise dissident Democrats to keep their criticism limited simply to loyal opposition. Southerners, though skeptical of Truman's welfare state program which they saw as an extension of the New Deal, would not have deserted the Democratic party had it not been for one aspect of this program: civil rights.

The issue of civil rights was not a phenomenon unique to the United States for a world-wide human rights movement was in progress. Colored peoples all over the world were rising up and asserting themselves. The fact that the United States wanted to project a model of democracy to the world as her major ideological weapon in the cold war undoubtedly affected the civil rights movement.

If the United States expected to gain the support and respect of the newly liberated blacks around the world, it was imperative that she improve her domestic situation.

Civil rights, especially for the Negro, received new hope during the Roosevelt era. Although Roosevelt had not been as active as he might have been in promoting the cause of civil rights, Negroes, the group suffering most from the depression, felt that his programs of relief and recovery were especially helpful to them. Blacks were encouraged by the President's reception of Negro visitors and his speaking engagements at Negro institutions. The overcoming of his physical handicap gave many blacks the hope that they too might overcome the handicaps society had given them.

Roosevelt was careful to acknowledge blacks in ways that gave them prestige but little power. For example, in making governmental appointments Roosevelt habitually sought the service of black specialists and advisers. Although other Presidents had relied on black advisers to a certain degree, Roosevelt used a far larger number whom he placed in positions of seeming importance. In reality, however, his "Black Cabinet" or "Black Brain Trust" members occupied few high positions of trust in government.

To satisfy Negroes in 1939 Roosevelt created a civil rights section in the Department of Justice. Although some 8,000 to 14,000 complaints of racial injustice were received

yearly, few were acted upon.[1] Leslie Fishel, scholar of black-white relations, notes that "Roosevelt's actual commitments to the American Negro were slim. He was more a symbol than an activist in his own right."[2] This view can be supported by examining the gap between what Roosevelt said or implied and what he actually did in regard to the Negro.

Roosevelt frequently intimated the need to aid the Negro without specifically mentioning him. In his annual message to Congress in 1935 he discussed the under-privileged but he did not designate the Negro. In that same year he warned WPA administrators not to discriminate against workers because of race, religion or politics. And in two other publicized statements Roosevelt "paid lip service to the accomplishments of the race."[3] But as Fishel points out: "his eye was ever on the balance of political forces and he never voluntarily came out foursquare for the Negro."[4]

According to Roy Wilkins, Roosevelt helped the Negro "only insofar as he refused to exclude [him] from his general policies that applied to the whole country."[5] Even on the

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[1]William Loren Katz, Eyewitness: The Negro in American History (New York: Pitman Publishing Company, 1967), p. 427.

[2]Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., "The Negro in the New Deal Era," in Twentieth Century America: Recent Interpretations, ed. by Barton J. Bernstein and Allen J. Matusow (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969), p. 290. Hereinafter referred to as Fishel, "The Negro in the New Deal Era."

[3]Ibid., pp. 295-97. [4]Ibid. [5]Ibid., p. 288.

issue of poll tax, Roosevelt, who personally favored abolishing it, never hinted at a federal law to usurp this power from the states. Although he undoubtedly felt real compassion for the underdog he was too astute a politician to risk such involvement. Northern sources had long pressured Roosevelt to support the much needed anti-lynching laws, but he was hesitant. After a particularly shocking case of lynching in California, where the victims happened to be white, Roosevelt made a statement condemning the action. Still, he made no request for federal legislation. According to Fishel, Roosevelt refused "because he needed southern votes in Congress on other matters."[6]

In 1941, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, threatened to march on Washington in hopes of making evident the need for job equality for blacks. Under the pressure of the proposed march, on June 25, 1941, Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802 forbidding discrimination in defense industries and establishing the Committee on Fair Employment Practices (FEPC). To satisfy the South he announced in Birmingham that it was "a war order, and not a social document."[7] Furthermore, the South had little reason to be concerned because the FEPC was unenforceable for the most part.

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[6] Ibid., p. 291.

[7] Tindall, The Emergence of the New South, pp. 713-14.

Yet the New Deal Administration with its programs, which inadvertently helped blacks, and with verbal statements directed at Negroes, won votes for the Democratic party. By 1934, it was clear that Negroes were severing their traditional ties to the Republican party. Since the Republican party made only meager efforts to win the black vote, Negroes had little choice in selecting a major party to support. Republicans could not convincingly promise federal relief, nor were they willing to support civil rights legislation that might win the blacks to their ranks.[8] The Republican party, still nourishing dreams of breaking the solid South, was, therefore, unwilling to take any action which might alienate potential southern supporters.

If President Roosevelt soft-pedaled the race issue, his wife, Eleanor, did not. She spoke and acted from a sincere belief in equality for all races. She invited racially mixed groups to the White House for tea and repeatedly defended blacks in public. Acting as an intermediary between Roosevelt and the representatives of black groups, Mrs. Roosevelt drew more official attention to the Negroes than that accorded by any previous Administration. It was Mrs. Roosevelt who gained an audience with the President for Walter White, NAACP official concerned with the

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[8]Fishel, "The Negro in the New Deal Era," p. 300.

passage of an anti-lynching bill. Then again when the DAR refused to let Marian Anderson, Negro opera singer, perform in Constitution Hall, it was Mrs. Roosevelt who had a hand in securing the use of the Lincoln Memorial for Miss Anderson's concert. With his wife serving in such a capacity, Roosevelt did not feel obligated to bring up unnecessarily the topic of race and thus lose political support from certain segments of the nation.[9]

There were others of importance in the Roosevelt Administration who also worked for Negro rights. One of the most outstanding was Harold Ickes, the Secretary of the Interior. Active in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, he was president of the local chapter in Chicago for a time. By naming responsible Negroes to positions in the Department of Interior, he set an example of racial non-discriminatory hiring. Also it was Ickes who was responsible for Roosevelt's appointment of William Henry Hastie, a Negro, as a federal judge in the Virgin Islands.

Although Roosevelt extended the powers of the federal government more than anyone since Lincoln and associated to an extent with blacks, he was also able to keep the South in line. Flurries of southern revolt occurred but these were small and spasmodic. Even Strom Thurmond

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[9] Ibid., p. 295.

admired Roosevelt enough that he displayed Roosevelt's picture in his office long after he had removed the one of Truman that once had hung alongside it.

Yet it was during the Roosevelt Administration that Negroes were allowed to participate more fully in the social and economic life of the nation. This was especially true of the war years when blacks became increasingly active in demanding equal rights and equal opportunities. Roosevelt, however, handled the question of civil rights without excessively antagonizing either the South or the black community. By expressing support for blacks he satisfied them and by not implementing a concrete civil rights program, he pacified the South.

It was during the war and because of the war that the blacks made their greatest progress toward attaining civil liberties. While wartime conditions amplified the status of civil rights in general, efforts to continue segregation in the armed forces called attention to the nation's reactionary racial policies.[10] In December of 1941, the War Department stood on record as refusing to desegregate the Army. But by November, 1945, an Army committee, after studying the matter thoroughly, requested the integration of its divisions. It was not until the Truman Administration, however, that actual desegregation of the armed forces was achieved.

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[10]Clark, The South, pp. 314-29.

Under the exigency of war Negroes contributed to Allied victories by working in factories at home and fighting abroad. Over a million blacks, men and women, served in all branches of the armed forces. Seven thousand Negroes served as officers, and Negro entertainers such as Louis Armstrong and Lena Horne helped to break the color line by touring the Army camps with USO troops.

There were then specific aspects of the war which called attention to the domestic state of civil rights in this country. Many Americans who were aware of the master race theories and practices of the Germans were awakened to the meaning of racial discrimination. Negroes and whites saw the incompatibility in American ideals and practices. The United States was fighting a world war to win freedom and equality for people around the globe, and yet it denied these same basic rights to a portion of its own population. The war experiences changed the attitudes of many southern blacks who had government jobs or who served overseas and enjoyed a degree of equality. They began to reject the second class treatment they received in the South. Even white southerners who served in the war frequently returned with new ideas on the matter of race.

Social acceptance of blacks and political and economic opportunities in the South, though still limited, became more general than ever before. Personal safety and security of blacks gradually increased. Lynching,

one of the most outrageous of racial crimes, appeared to be ending: the recorded number in 1942 was five and in 1945 it had dropped to one. Negro leaders seeking anti-lynching legislation during and after the war organized the Southern Regional Council in Atlanta in 1944 to combat prejudice. Another favorable development for blacks during the war was the awareness of both major political parties of the significance of the issue of civil rights and black votes.

These gains made by blacks were not achieved without some friction and opposition and because of the strivings of the blacks for equality, the period was one of racial unrest, national discriminations, and increased tensions. Rumors spread throughout the South that black men would harm white women with impunity since white males were serving in the war in such large numbers. Stories of "Eleanor Clubs," formed by Negro women who were to stop working in white kitchens at a given time, spread anxiety among southerners. There were also rumors that blacks were arming themselves with ice picks for a major uprising. Time proved these stories to be baseless. Nevertheless, with all its changes, the war did bring a major racial crisis to the South. But racial tensions were not confined to the South. Negroes who moved to northern industrial areas and to the West cost in search of employment clashed with urgan dwellers. Riots or near-riots occurred in New York, Detroit, and Los Angeles in 1943 and 1944.

At the end of the war, Negroes, most lacking seniority in industry due to recent employment, lost their jobs with the closing of wartime businesses. When the FEPC ended in 1946, they lost all semblance of protection against discrimination. In spite of efforts by the CIO and AFL to end racial injustice in labor unions, discrimination persisted. Since blacks were the last to be hired and the first to be fired, chronic unemployment became a way of life. This economic deprivation forced many Negroes into tenements or shacks and in some cases drove them into criminal activities.

As blacks were becoming increasingly aware of the need to expand their civil rights, Harry S. Truman assumed the presidency. His domestic program, the Fair Deal, which he clearly outlined to Congress on September 6, 1945, antagonized southerners. He advocated public housing, a fair employment practices law, future TVA's on the Missouri and Arkansas rivers, an increase in the minimum wage law and an expanded social security program. The Truman program, as understood by many southerners, sounded like the blueprint of a highly socialistic system of government.

If the Fair Deal was an extension of the New Deal, the most notable progress beyond the New Deal was in the area of civil rights.[11] According to the traditional

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[11]Barton J. Bernstein, "America in War and Peace: The Test of Liberalism," in Twentieth Century America: Recent Interpretations, ed. by Barton J. Bernstein and

interpretation as presented by Truman, he had long felt a sincere desire to help his fellow man, black as well as white, and his voting record in Congress seemed to support this view. He had opposed tabling an anti-lynching bill in July, 1937, a position which he maintained throughout 1938. In 1940, he backed the Amendment of the Selective Service Act which was to prevent discrimination in the service. He also encouraged outlawing the poll tax in 1942. In spite of his apparent support for civil rights measures some historians such as Barton Bernstein, contend that Truman's record in this area was not as impressive as it could have been. When Truman was a senator, Bernstein explains, he was not particularly interested in blacks, and in fact even thought segregation and equality compatible. Bernstein recorded that Truman only "occasionally supported FEPC and abolition of the poll tax."[12] While Truman condemned racial violence, Bernstein said he refused to do much other than pay lip service to the cause of the blacks until politics entered the picture. Although it is true that Truman was not a leading civil rights advocate in his public service days prior to the presidency, he

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Allen J. Matusow (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1969), p. 364. Hereinafter referred to as Bernstein, "Text of Liberalism."

[12]Barton J. Bernstein, "The Ambiguous Legacy: The Truman Administration and Civil Rights," in Politics and Policies of the Truman Administration, ed. by Barton J. Bernstein (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, Inc., 1970), p. 272. Hereinafter referred to as Bernstein, "Ambiguous Legacy."

was at least concerned with the plight of the Negro. After becoming President, Truman's handling of civil rights issues became suspect. Political expediency appeared to supersede other motives in determining the course that he followed in 1948.

His first measures in the presidency included cautiously extending legal rights and personal protection to blacks. During the first year he occupied the presidency, Truman did not firmly assert himself on civil rights, perhaps, because he feared splitting the already tenuous Democratic coalition of labor, blacks, and southerners. While Truman diligently supported a permanent FEPC which he knew Congress would refuse to pass, he was less energetic in enforcing the temporary FEPC created by Roosevelt.[13]

Nonetheless, in December, 1945, Truman issued an Executive Order on "Continuing the Work of the Fair Employment Practice Committee." In part it ordered the committee to investigate and make suggestions in the form of a report to the President concerning discrimination in industries engaged in the production of military supplies, or to those involved in the change to a peacetime economy.[14] The temporary FEPC was at least better than none at all.

Without doubt the social and political climate of the period pressured him into action. As President, he

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[13]Bernstein, "Test of Liberalism," p. 366.

[14]News Release, December 20, 1945, George Elsey Papers, Discrimination File.

occupied the office at a time when foreign affairs were of utmost importance. Truman thought it inconceivable that Americans could protect a color line domestically while continuing to deal with Asian and African peoples. According to him, we should "practice what we preached," and as he wrote in his memoirs, he did all that he could toward this end.[15] Even Bernstein concedes that Truman who was "prodded by conscience and pushed by politics" made more far-reaching promises to blacks than had any previous President.[16]

Truman was active in several areas of furthering black civil rights. In 1946, he appointed a committee to study discrimination in higher education. This committee called for an end to the inequalities and various forms of racial discrimination that existed. Although integration in the armed services started during the closing years of the war, Truman gave direction and impetus to it in the postwar period. As a result of the report issued by a committee appointed by Truman in 1948 called Freedom To Serve, the Army, now cognizant of the committee's recommendations, adopted non-discriminatory policies in regard to jobs and personnel. The growth of racial violence and political pressures forced the President to act favorably

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[15]Harry S. Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, Vol. II of Memoirs (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1956), p. 183. Hereinafter referred to as Truman, Memoirs, II.

[16]Bernstein, "Test of Liberalism," p. 366.

to a request made by the NAACP in 1946. As spokesman for the NAACP Walter White along with other liberals informed the President of the lynchings and injustices to which Negroes were being subjected in the South and prevailed upon him to appoint a committee to investigate the matter.[17]

On December 5, 1946, Truman appointed a special committee to report on the status of civil rights in the nation. According to his instructions this committee was established not for one particular minority group but for all racial and religious groups. He requested that the committee submit a report consisting of recommendations which would provide more "effective means and procedures for the protection of the civil rights of the people of the United States."[18] On January 15, 1947, Truman addressed the members of the Committee on Civil Rights, noting that it was time that the United States implemented the Bill of Rights. Acknowledging that much progress had been made, he urged that more be done to insure the civil rights of all citizens.[19] Later, speaking at the annual meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People on June 29, 1947, the President declared

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[17]Walter White, A Man Called White, The Autobiography of Walter White (New York: Viking Press, 1948), pp. 330-32.

[18]President's Committee on Civil Rights, To Secure These Rights (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1947), pp. vii. Hereinafter referred to as To Secure These Rights.

[19]Truman, Memoirs, II, p. 181.

that all Americans should be free to lead the kind of life they choose; a man "should be limited only by his responsibility to his fellow countrymen" and by "his ability, his industry and his character."[20] How Truman really felt about racial policies would continually be debated among contemporary politicians and historians. Nevertheless, Truman did establish the committee whose report would have far-reaching political implications.

The composition of the committee was significant in that had Truman so desired he could have appointed moderates or even conservatives, thereby insuring that only mild recommendations would be made. Instead, he appointed prominent liberals whose recommendations and actions he could not control. The administration referred to the committee as Noah's Ark because it consisted of two blacks, two women, two Catholics, two Jews, two businessmen, two southerners, two labor leaders, and two college presidents.[21]

During the committee's ten-month meeting period no administration representative sought to influence the report. Possibly Truman wanted a strong set of recommendations so that when he outlined his own program it would, by comparison, appear mild.[22]

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Bernstein, "Ambiguous Legacy," p. 278.

[22] Ibid., pp. 281-83.

When the report was completed, the focus of it clearly was on the blacks in the South because their civil rights were compromised more than any other group. The four-part report began with a background of the ideal of civil rights followed by a presentation of its status in 1947. It attempted next to explain the government's role in attaining these rights and finally it presented thirty-four bold recommendations. Significantly, at the beginning, the report acknowledged the necessity of four basic rights. Essential to the individual as well as society, these were the right to the safety and security of the person, to citizenship, to freedom of conscience and expression, and to equality of opportunity.

One of the chief threats to the safety and security of the individual was lynching. In spite of a steady decline of this practice from 1882-1947, there still had not been a year without at least one reported incident. Lynching victims were most often black and might have been guilty of nothing more than petty theft or perhaps of no crime at all except that of "being black."[23]

Individual security was also found to be threatened by police brutality, the administration of justice, and involuntary servitude. The report cited specific cases of prisoners beaten senseless and even killed by law officers. The judicial process, as pointed out by the report, often

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[23]To Secure These Rights, pp. 20-23.

ended for blacks in perfunctory trials or fines or sentences heavier than those levied on whites guilty of the same crime. In citing cases of involuntary servitude in Alabama and Mississippi the report found that debts or prison sentences sometimes lured the poor and defenseless into conditions of near slavery.[24] The report further condemned the wartime evacuation of Japanese-Americans as a threat to the safety and security of the individual.

Under the heading of abridgment of citizenship rights numerous examples were cited. White primaries, the poll tax, literacy requirements and intimidation were noted as the most common methods of discouraging black suffrage in the South. The report also paid special attention to the problems of citizenship of residents of Alaska and Hawaii.

Equality of opportunity was one of the most frequently abused of all the civil rights. Not only was it difficult for minority groups to obtain employment, but once hired, the minority worker was usually paid less than other workers. The main areas of discrimination involved education, housing, and public accommodations. Many public parks, beaches, playgrounds, movies, restaurants, and other public and private services were closed to blacks. These situations were found to be most prevalent in the South. Findings of the committee revealed that eighteen states

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[24] Ibid., p. 30.

prohibited this kind of discrimination while twenty states compelled it. The District of Columbia was an area, according to the committee, where civil rights were abused excessively; the committee concluded that the situation in the nation's capitol was "intolerable."[25]

To insure these basic rights, the committee decided, was the responsibility of the federal government. After outlining the constitutional basis for federal action in this area, the report noted the historical precedents for appraising and altering civil rights.[26] Twice earlier, during the Revolutionary era to 1789 and in the period of the Civil War, the state of civil rights had been carefully evaluated and changed. According to the Civil Rights Committee a change was in order.

The committee enumerated moral, economic, and international reasons for making such reforms. Morally, the report read, it was essential to reaffirm traditional democratic ideals by putting the theory of freedom into practice. Economically, as long as discrimination was practiced in business, only a part of the work force was being utilized, and thus, Americans were not "achieving maximum production" levels. With a prestigious international status, domestic racial incidents had more widespread implications than ever before. As a model for democracy throughout the world, the United States could hardly

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[25] Ibid., p. 32.

[26] Ibid., pp. 107-35.

overlook such blatant deprivation of civil rights, as the committee had discovered.

The committee, in conclusion, offered thirty-four recommendations under six major headings. Under the first of these major headings they pointed out the necessity of strengthening the machinery for the protection of civil rights. The section in the Department of Justice dealing with civil rights should be expanded to provide for the establishment of regional and special offices. This would mean an increase in appropriations and personnel, including more professional state and local police forces. They recommended the establishment both of a permanent Commission on Civil Rights and of a Joint Standing Committee on Civil Rights in Congress.[27]

The next major recommendation included the enactment of laws against police brutality, lynching, and involuntary servitude. They called for the abolition of poll taxes, discriminatory tactics against minorities to deny them suffrage, a modification of federal naturalization laws, and an end to segregation in the Army.

Another recommendation asked that Congress clarify loyalty requirements so as not to jeopardize the civil rights of federal employees. But the most significant, and to the South the most infamous, recommendation called for integration of all aspects of American life. In public

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[27] Ibid., pp. 151-55.

and private schools, in health services, in housing, and in interstate transportation, segregation should cease. The report emphasized that neither job employment nor public accommodations should be operated on a discriminatory basis.[28] Specifically, the committee requested that the District of Columbia reform its civil rights practices to insure freedom and equality to all its residents.

And the final recommendation of the committee was the initiation of an educational campaign to inform the public of the importance of preserving and extending civil rights for all citizens. The committee hoped that education of the public on matters of prejudice would facilitate the implementation of these recommendations.

Although the President's Committee on Civil Rights submitted their recommendations in October, 1947, no action was taken until February 2, 1948. At that time, Truman, upon the urging of presidential advisor, Clark Clifford, delivered his civil rights message to Congress. Truman's decision to make these proposals was influenced by the threat of a third party led by Henry Wallace, a factor which forced Truman toward a more liberal position.[29] His request, moderate in nature, incorporated only ten of the thirty-four proposals suggested by the committee. The President's suggestions were as follows:

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[28] Ibid., pp. 166-70.

[29] Bernstein, "Ambiguous Legacy," p. 282.

1. Establishing a permanent Commission on Civil Rights, a Joint Congressional Committee on Civil Rights, and a Civil Rights Division in the Department of Justice.
2. Strengthening existing civil rights statutes.
3. Providing Federal protection against lynching.
4. Protecting more adequately the right to vote.
5. Establishing a Fair Employment Practice Commission to prevent unfair discrimination in employment.
6. Prohibiting discrimination in interstate transportation facilities.
7. Providing home-rule and suffrage in Presidential elections for the residents of the District of Columbia.
8. Providing Statehood for Hawaii and Alaska and a greater measure of self-government for our island possessions.
9. Equalizing the opportunities for residents of the United States to become naturalized citizens.
10. Settling the evacuation claims of Japanese-Americans.[30]

Mild as these recommendations seem in retrospect, they hit the South like a bombshell. All of the pent-up dissatisfaction that southerners had been harboring toward the New Deal-Fair Deal programs was unleashed with blind fury. Fiery orations by politicians, preachers, and ordinary citizens were heard from all parts of the South. The longer Truman's message was discussed in the South the more exaggerated and distorted it became. One example of the gross misrepresentation that occurred can be seen by a full-page advertisement that was carried in the Birmingham News, May 2, 1948. A portion of this was as follows:

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[30]Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, 1948, Harry S. Truman, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches and Statements of the President (Washington: G.P.O., 1964), p. 126. Hereinafter referred to as Truman, Papers.

Defeat Truman's Civil Rights Program
Safeguard Segregation!
What "Civil Rights" Means to you:

President Truman has asked Congress to pass his "Civil Rights" Program--aimed at the destruction of the South's segregation laws. Here is what this program calls for:

1. Abolishment of segregation in all public schools--both as to children and teachers.
2. Abolishment of segregation in all colleges, including church schools, such as Judson, Howard, Birmingham-Southern and Huntingdon.
3. Abolishment of segregation in State-supported colleges such as Alabama, Auburn, Montevallo, and the Teacher Colleges.
4. Abolishment of segregation in restaurants, hotels, picture shows, street cars, buses, barber shops, beauty shops and swimming pools.
5. Compulsory employment of negroes in every business establishment (up to approximately 40% in Jefferson County) and the discharge of present employes where necessary to achieve a ratio of employment in all businesses of 60% white employes and 40% negro employes.
6. Compulsory association of whites and negroes, working side by side in offices and factories, food, drug and department stores.
7. Compulsory upgrading of negro employes to positions of supervision over whites in the same racial ratio.
8. Enforcement of these requirements by fine and jail sentences.[31]

"Prohibiting discrimination in interstate transportation facilities" was the only direct reference to segregation that the President had made. In regard to this point, Truman pointed out that the Supreme Court had already declared state laws that required segregation on public carriers in interstate travel to be unconstitutional. Truman did not even allude to ending segregation in beauty

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[31]Heard, A Two Party South? pp. 161-62.

shops, movies, restaurants, churches, schools, or swimming pools. In regard to the request of fair employment practice legislation to end discrimination based on race, color, religion, or national origin, there was nothing said about applying these requirements to all businesses, public or private.

Out of the ten proposals made by Truman, the South was only concerned with four. They focused their attention on their own interpretation of the proposals to eliminate segregation, to abolish the poll tax, to pass an anti-lynching law, and to enact a fair employment practice law.[32] Southern opposition as expressed in their rhetoric centered around these four points, all most distasteful to the South.

Some efforts were made by the Truman Administration to soothe the South. On February 4, presidential aide Charles Murphy approached Alben Barkley, the Senate minority leader, with an "omnibus" civil rights bill, but Barkley advised that they wait until the southerners calmed down; the bill was never introduced because the South never calmed down. Truman also retreated in that he was slow to take action against discrimination in federal employment and against segregation in the armed forces. These two matters were finally introduced in late July.

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[32]"Know All the Facts About Truman's So-Called Civil Rights Program, and What It Means to You," States Rights Clipping File, Mississippi State Archives. Hereinafter referred to as "Know All the Facts."

The administration's strategy was to begin with a strong program and then modify it in order to satisfy the right wing of the party. Truman even agreed to use the generalized and meaningless 1944 platform on civil rights in 1948. Negroes, desirous of a stronger plank, still supported Truman because his program "was unmatched by any twentieth century president."[33]

Most of the country had mixed reactions to the President's message, but in the South condemnation was solid. The day after the message was delivered, the Ku Klux Klan, in Swainsboro, Georgia, burned a fiery cross in protest.[34] Unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident but rather one that was repeated in several other small southern towns. Most southerners did not read the committee's report nor could they distinguish between what the report said and what Truman requested in his Congressional message. Undoubtedly, there was a great deal of genuine confusion on the part of some southerners. Others exaggerated the meaning of Truman's message by explaining what they thought it would eventually mean. To generalize about the motives of the various southern leaders is difficult. Some capitalized upon the fear of their constituencies in hopes of gaining

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[33]Bernstein, "Test of Liberalism," p. 368.

[34]"The South: War Between Democrats," Newsweek, February 16, 1948, pp. 24-25. Hereinafter referred to as "War Between the Democrats."

political power for themselves; other, genuinely alarmed at the growth of the power of the federal government, sincerely felt a need to warn the public. Whatever the reasons for the distortions, they grew progressively stronger with the passage of time and their audience grew increasingly more receptive to their rhetoric.

Since many southerners were unfamiliar with what actually had been said by Truman and by the committee, they relied on what their representatives told them. It is essential, then, to examine closely the rhetoric of the political leaders of the South. To many southerners, the program was, according to Hodding Carter, in the New York Times, "a politically motivated and all-out offensive against the conglomerate of laws, customs and attitudes which give expression to the doctrine of white supremacy."[35]

Southern Congressional reaction to the civil rights message was vociferous. Some seventy-five Congressmen, who represented the ten southern states and the two border states of Kentucky and Tennessee, signed a resolution condemning the civil rights program. The thrust of the resolution was concerned with the usurpation of the rights of the states by the federal government.[36] Senator Overton

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[35]Hodding Carter, "The Civil Rights Issue As Seen in the South: A Mississippi Editor Analyzes the Factors That Lie Beneath the Great Controversy," New York Times Magazine, March 21, 1948, pp. 15, 52-55. Hereinafter referred to as Carter, "Civil Rights Issue."

[36]"Five Days that Shook the Democrats," Newsweek, March 1, 1948, pp. 15-16.

Brooks of Louisiana stated that Truman had "cast the die," and "crossed the Rubicon," and now was "marching on the Southland with the battle cry of social, political, and economic equality of the Negro and the white man."[37] To Brooks, war had "been openly declared by the chieftain of the National Democratic Party against the traditions and Caucasianism of the South."[38] Numerous similar denunciations were heard across the South. Mississippi's Senator James Eastland roared, "This proves that organized mongrel minorities control the Government." Gene Cox, representative from Georgia cried that it "sounds like the program of the Communist Party."[39] Representative William M. Colmer of Mississippi expounded that the logical extension of the Truman program would mean that the federal government would eventually control every single action of every citizen. Implementation of the civil rights legislation would mean:

> . . . the creation of a Federal police force, which, in effect, would become an American version of the Hitler gestapo. Its agents, not unlike Stalin's secret police, would rove about the Nation policing elections, meddling with private business, interfering in lawsuits, breeding litigation, keeping the people in a state of duress and intimidation,

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[37] Congressional Record, 80th Cong., 2d Sess., 1948, A 1512.

[38] Ibid.

[39] "The Congress: Congress' Week," Time, February 16, 1948, p. 25.

and in effect, making of the Nation a police state.[40]

Senator James Eastland explained that civil rights legislation was unnecessary because the South had no race problem. The "races live together in contentment," said Eastland. "Both races know and respect each other" and the "Negro receives a square deal. Both races recognize that the society of the South is built upon segregation."[41]

Congressman Tom Murray of Tennessee urged all Congressmen to read the report of the President's committee carefully. He warned that it was "the most revolutionary document of its kind that has ever been made." He continued to point out that the report was "full of slurs, libel, and misrepresentation and untruths about the South." Murray called the whole report an insult to the South and a document which was sanctioned by the Communists. According to Murray, the adoption of the civil rights program which would destroy all vestiges of states' rights and local rule would result in the formation of a totalitarian government in the United States.[42]

In accordance with the committee's suggestion that civil rights information be made available to the public, broadcasts were made for this purpose. Richard B. Russell,

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[40]Congressional Record, 80th Cong., 2d Sess., 1948, p. 4270.

[41]Ibid., pp. 1193-98. [42]Ibid., p. 1702.

Senator from Georgia, asked the Mutual Broadcasting System for time to answer these broadcasts. The network complied with his request and on March 23, 1948, he and three other Senators aired the southern point of view. The thrust of their orations centered around four specific points: the increasing centralization of government, the poll tax, the anti-lynching proposal and the FEPC. In his introduction, Russell commented in general on the program. He began his comments by objecting to the fact that the criticisms of the committee's report were directed solely at the South. He objected to the composition of the committee charging that there was no one on the committee who represented the majority southern opinion. Although there were southerners on the committee, their opinions, according to Russell, were not reflective of the true South. Russell mourned the loss of local self-government and the creation of federal policemen who would enforce the new laws. He saw such extreme centralization as inevitably leading to "complete regimentation and to that disastrous loss of personal liberties which marks the centralized police state."[43]

Senator Burnet R. Maybank of South Carolina declared that since the Constitution specifically provided that the states determine qualifications for voting, the

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[43] Ibid., A 1863-64.

repeal of the poll tax laws in any state would be illegal and in his words, a "serious departure from governmental principles."[44] Senator Clyde R. Joey of North Carolina, speaking against the anti-lynching bill, claimed that only one person in the United States was lynched during the entire previous year. There were, however, according to his estimates, "over 13,000 murders, over 12,000 rapes and over 1,500,000 serious crimes"; yet the committee on civil rights had not so much as mentioned these facts.[45]

In his analysis of the FEPC bill, Senator Lister Hill of Alabama called it a bill "to destroy civil rights." He thought it unconstitutional for the government to regulate the making of contracts in regard to hiring and firing of workers. The endless interrogations and investigations occasioned by such a bill would disrupt business "to the point where orderly plant management and efficient production would be impossible."[46]

These comments by Senators Russell, Maybank, Joey, and Hill highlighted what the South labeled as the most offensive parts of the Truman program. How large an audience they had or how much influence their comments carried is impossible to estimate. But these were the views that were declared to reflect the southern opinion.

Even at this early point some southerners saw the need for drastic action. Harold Willingham, representative

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[44] Ibid., A 1865. [45] Ibid. [46] Ibid., A 1866.

of Cobb County in the Georgia Legislature, proposed a plan of setting up a fourth party. His colleague, Representative Henderson Lanham also of Georgia, however, believed this was unwise and that the fight should be an intra-party battle. Lanham advised that at the convention the South should demand the re-establishment of the two-thirds rule, the selection of a southerner for the Vice-Presidency, and the abandonment by the Democratic party of anti-southern measures.[47] Lanham's three demands were proposed at the Democratic Convention only to be ignored. There was, however, an interesting solution to the South's problem proposed by a Republican Congressman who offered to make a deal with the southern Democrats. Mr. Clare Hoffman, in a speech to the House of Representatives, proposed that southerners make common cause with the Republicans. The Republicans then would block civil rights legislation if the southerners would help them on other issues. This was the only way, he pointed out, that sound conservative government could be restored to the United States. Most southerners, however, considered this a revolutionary proposal and dismissed it with little, if any, serious consideration.[48]

Southern reaction to civil rights in general was reflected in numerous pamphlets and papers which appeared with frequency all over the South. One such paper put out by the southern opponents of Truman's civil rights program,

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[47] Ibid., A 1890. [48] Ibid., p. 2335.

entitled "An Analysis of the Truman Program and the Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights," was an expression of southern reaction to the proposals. First and foremost, the authors pointed out that the South had a peculiar kind of problem with the Negro that only those who lived in the South could ever hope to understand. Because of the heritage of slavery, the South should be allowed to make its own laws concerning race. According to this paper, Truman's commission was established for reasons of political expediency--to win "the vote of the Negroes in those states where this minority block amounts to a balance of power between the two parties."[49]

In another section entitled "The Far-Reaching and Not Generally Known Extent of the Report and Its Recommendations," the reorganization of the Department of Justice so as to provide enforcement faculties for the law was regarded as particularly distasteful to the South. The first observation made on this proposal was that it "would result in the establishment of a Gestapo" that would invade all privacies and rights of individual citizens.

The pamphlet compared the anti-lynching proposal of 1948 to the Force Bill of the 1870's. In conclusion, the report stated its displeasure with Truman as a nominee and

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[49]"An Analysis of the Truman Program and the Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights," Montgomery, Alabama, State Department of Archives and History, Frank M. Dixon Papers, 1948 File.

promised that the South would be united against his renomination.[50] Another pamphlet, "Know All the Facts About Truman's So-Called 'Civil Rights' Program and What It Means To You," said that the Truman proposals, were not civil rights, "they are social and political rights just as much opposed to Southern traditions as any that were advocated by the carpetbaggers."[51]

A state-by-state survey showed anti-Truman feelings to be most belligerent in the six states of the Deep South: Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas.[52] In Arkansas, Governor Ben Laney expressed an opinion that seemed to be typical of the feelings of most of his constituents. He stated that he had no "antagonism toward any man or race, creed or color."[53] He claimed he would support any program that would improve mankind, but that these men would have to accept the responsibility that accompanied privileges. Laney was not opposed to the elimination of the poll tax and felt that it would be done before long by all of the southern states, but he did want it done by the state government and not by federal order. Each state, he thought, should dictate its own form of registration and could manage to handle its

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[50] Ibid. [51] "Know All the Facts."

[52] "War Between the Democrats," p. 25.

[53] Letter, Ben Laney to Vincent Cunningham, April 12, 1948, Magnolia, Arkansas, Ben Laney Papers, Governor Ben Laney File.

own affairs including the lynching issue without the aid of the federal government or any other state.[54] According to the letters received by Laney, approximately 98 per cent of his constituents were favorable to his stand with regard to the Truman message.[55] Although these attitudes reflect the public mood in Arkansas only, it may be assumed that such attitudes were prevalent in some other southern states. Some of the public response was as radical as the following letter that Senator Allen J. Ellender of Louisiana received:

> In brief, if the civil rights bill becomes a law it is then we begin sewing seeds for a mongrel, or unnamed, race. We are now trying to "make Democracy live" just to please Russia. The FEPC and the anti-segregation law will ultimately make our race anonymous, a race unknown to God Almighty. Why not give these unfortunate people a reservation here in the USA, a suitable part of this country where they could run their own business, educate their offsprings to their highest standards. It would take 25 years to make the change but it would be worth the price and patience.[56]

Fortunately most of the letters were not so hostile but many were filled with similar ideas. From Florida, Governor Millard F. Caldwell interpreted the whole civil rights program as an effort to alter the form of government

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[54]Letter, Ben Laney to M. F. Webb, June 11, 1948, Laney Papers, Employ the Physically Handicapped Week File.

[55]Letters, Laney Papers, Employ the Physically Handicapped Week File.

[56]Letter, Thomas Hilton to Senator Allen Ellender, December 30, 1948, Laney Papers, Governors Inaugural Addresses File.

in the United States. He expressed great concern at a "Washington Gestapo to police the internal affairs of the several States." The powers that would enable the civil rights program to be enforced would also spy on the private lives of the citizens, interfere with the operation of schools, churches, and even the homes. This force would determine what knowledge and beliefs the people would have and how they should live. Caldwell charged that "the purpose of the legislation is political and not humanitarian, sociological or religious in nature."[57]

Caldwell said that it was unfortunate that the front of civil rights was being put up by the administration at the expense of the minorities. He saw the whole program as a means of getting the minority vote. Caldwell asserted that federal interference "will invite discord and disorder" and "instead of encouraging a spirit of mutual helpfulness, the Civil Rights Program will array section against section and class against class."[58]

While denouncing the civil rights program, many southerners began questioning the motives of Truman. The charge of political expedience was repeated again and again. That Truman was more concerned with the northern and the black vote than he was with the welfare of the

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[57]Speech, Governor Millard Caldwell, April 6, 1948, Laney Papers, Governor Ben Laney File.

[58]Ibid.

nation was one of the most frequently repeated notions. In Texas, Governor Beauford Jester said "the most unexpected and cruelest wound has come from the dagger blow of a trusted friend." As he saw it, the program "was proposed for the sole purpose of getting Negro votes in the so-called doubtful States."[59]

Representative Lanham of Georgia accused Truman of not believing in his own civil rights program, but of expounding it to counteract the program of the extreme liberals, led by Henry Wallace. Truman, Lanham charged, was out to win the Negro vote in the urban areas.[60] Gessner T. McCorvey of Alabama made similar charges by characterizing the "Civil Strife Program" as a "conscienceless betrayal of the South," the purpose of which was to win the Negro vote in the North and East. McCorvey added that it was difficult to imagine that "such unprincipaled political opportunists could live in this great country of ours."[61]

Southern reactionaries felt that the man in the White House had betrayed them. In 1944 Franklin Roosevelt had chosen Truman, a border state man, who supposedly

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[59]Speech, Governor Buford Jester, April 20, 1948, Montgomery, Alabama, State Department of Archives and History, Governor Jim Folsom Papers, Democratic Party File.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Gessner T. McCorvey, "A Deep South States' Rights Democrat Views the 1952 Presidential Election," Dixon Papers, Unfiled. Hereinafter referred to as McCorvey, "A States' Rights Democrat."

understood the problems of the South, as his vice-president. Now southerners discovered that Truman intended to alter the southern "caste system" and they were outraged. Propaganda charged that the President advocated intermarriage, integration of the races at social functions and schools, and the eventual "mongrelization" of the races.

Truman's personal image in the South was shattered as grossly as was his civil rights program. After the introduction of the program, the South abounded with slanderous literature on the personal life of the President. He was accused of being a crooked politician, of illegally securing the nomination for the United States Senate, and of being one of the "Four Horsemen of the Pendergast Machine."[62] The validity of such propaganda was accepted unquestioningly by radical southerners who thought nothing of the personal political risks that Truman was taking by supporting such a program.

An examination of the political situation in 1948 exemplifies the problems inherent in Truman's action. He was faced with three divisions in his party: the radicals, who followed Henry Wallace of the Progressive party; the liberals, like James Roosevelt and Hubert Humphrey of the Americans for Democratic Action; and the conservatives, who later formed the Dixiecrat party.

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[62]"Know All the Facts."

Even though Wallace was being discredited by Communist support, since he could harness the votes of the left-wingers and northern Negroes, Truman found it necessary to pay attention to some of the ideas he espoused, especially the drive for equality for blacks. Although the moderate liberals stood for a progressive type government which Truman could supply if Congress did not continue to thwart his every plan, they disliked the methods that Truman used to implement his ideas. They felt that he acted too slowly and was too moderate in his program.

The conservatives, primarily from the South, were historically committed to the Democratic party due to their age-old hostility toward the Republicans. It might have been possible to hold them in line with threats of withholding patronage or reprisals against those southerners in key positions, but it was difficult to guage correctly just how far the South would go in their opposition to Truman.

It seemed at the time that Truman would have been wise to pay lip service to civil rights without making specific proposals. Although some of his advisers proposed such a course and repeatedly implored him to modify his civil rights message, the President would not agree to this, nor would he retreat later on the strong civil rights plank adopted at the Democratic Convention. John E. Barriere, member of the Research Division of the Democratic National

Committee, explained that Truman disliked the strong civil rights statement but once it was adopted, felt obliged to support it for political reasons.[63]

A somewhat conflicting view was presented by presidential aide, Samuel Brightman, and Jack Redding, Director of Public Relations for the Democratic National Committee, denying that politics was a chief consideration credited Truman as having acted with sincere "conviction and courage in this area."[64] Redding confirms Brightman's statement. To the charge that Truman used civil rights to enhance his political power, Redding contended that the President had no ulterior motives but was just a plain man who did things in a clear and direct manner--a factor which perpetually confused political analysts looking for secret motives and plans.[65]

If some of Truman's advisers suggested a moderate course on civil rights, it should be noted that the most influential of his advisers were more liberal. Clark Clifford, the President's most trusted liberal adviser assured Truman of the South's loyalty to the Democratic party and urged him to concentrate on winning the votes

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[63]Transcript of Interview, John E. Barriere, December 20, 1966, Truman Library.

[64]Transcript of Interview, Samuel C. Brightman, December 7-8, 1966, Truman Library.

[65]Jack Redding, Inside the Democratic Party (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1958), pp. 129-33.

of the urban North. In the Clifford Memo, the famous document outlining Truman's political strategy, Clifford advised him to take a more positive stand on the issue of civil rights for the purpose of winning the liberal and black vote.[66]

Regardless of motives Truman made significant contributions in the area of race relations. Perhaps he was not as progressive on the race issue as some would have liked, but when judged in historical perspective, he could be considered a pioneer. While he was not totally immune to playing politics, he did have a sincere interest in helping minority groups, and by sending his civil rights message to Congress and running on a strong civil rights platform for re-election, Truman displayed uncommon courage.

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[66]"Memorandum for the President," November 19, 1947, Truman Library, Clark Clifford Papers, Political File. Hereinafter referred to as Clifford Memo.

CHAPTER III

ISSUES AND IDEOLOGY

A major turning point in southern political history occurred in February of 1948 when Truman delivered his civil rights message. From this point on momentum for a southern bolt away from the Democratic party gradually increased. The support of the national Democratic party for the 1948 civil rights message demonstrated that the administration and its supporters lacked empathy with the South.[1]

As far as the conservative southern Democrats were concerned the Republican party was little better than the Democratic party, for in 1944 the Republicans advocated a fair employment practices program. Conservatives from the South, who were disillusioned with the liberal and centralizing tendencies of both major parties decided to form a separate political organization dedicated to the ideal of states' rights. Although the party itself did not take firm shape until after the Democratic convention was held, the impetus for the movement had long existed. Even after

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[1]E. A. Brown, "Why the Democratic Party is Disintegrating," Columbia, South Carolina, State Historical Society, Burnet R. Maybank Papers, Democratic Party File.

the actual formation of the States' Rights or Dixiecrat party there was a great deal of confusion that clouded the status of the Dixiecrats: were they a separate party, were they a bolting group within the Democratic party, or were they, as their leaders claimed, the real Democratic party?

Traditionally, the rise of third parties in the United States had come about when the major parties failed to represent the ideas of a certain group. Although third parties were of various types, the usual pattern was for their protest to be absorbed by the major parties and for them then to disappear.[2] The various types of third parties included those sectional in nature, such as the La-Follette Progressives or the Farm Labor group; those with a single issue to espouse, such as the perennial Prohibition Party; those of a splinter variety lasting only for one election, such as the Roosevelt Progressives; and those that were outside the mainstream of American political ideology, such as the Communist or Socialist parties.

The functions of third parties are enormous: they serve to call attention to new policies, to point up serious problems, to offer solutions, and to serve as critics of the two major parties. Sometimes they may hold enough of a balance of power in presidential elections to be able to bargain with both parties in order to gain acceptance

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[2]Heard, A Two Party South? p. 30.

for at least some of their ideas. The weight of third parties may be used to steal the victory from one party and give it to another. Although this is a possibility, however, only about six times have third parties actually influenced national elections.[3]

Third parties have also served "as pilot plants for testing new ideas."[4] Frequently, if a new idea or policy supported by the third party is favorably accepted by the public, a major party will often adopt it as its own. If this does not occur, the new idea is generally forgotten.[5] According to the safety-valve theory, the function of minor parties can, if the majority is willing to be tolerant, provide a healthy situation in a democratic society by offering a legitimate and organized channel of expression for discontent. The two-party system may be strengthened if it absorbs some of the ideas of the third parties as is usually the case.[6] American historian John Hicks writes that third parties have developed in periods of prosperity more often than in periods of depression. When one section of the country feels it is being mistreated by another section, the resultant

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[3]William B. Hesseltine, Third Party Movements in the United States (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1962), p. 3. Hereinafter referred to as Hesseltine, Third Party Movements.

[4]Ibid., pp. 100-1.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid.

factor is sometimes the rise of a third party.[7] This observation is applicable to the Dixiecrats.

Some minor parties have produced leaders who later became prominent Figures in the major parties: Thurlow Weed, Thaddeus Stevens, and Charles Sumner are examples. Ex-Presidents Millard Fillmore, Martin Van Buren, and Theodore Roosevelt have headed three third party movements. Two Vice-Presidents, John C. Breckinridge and Henry Wallace, ran for the presidency on third party tickets, and governors, lesser state officials, and unknowns have also headed minor party movements.

The Dixiecrat party, however, differed from other third parties in numerous respects. In the first place its aims were limited to presidential politics for one election year. Thus they began their work from the top down rather than from the bottom up. Most protest parties such as the Greenback, Free Soil, Populists, and Progressives were left wing in nature.[8] But working in reverse from the usual third party, the southern protest came from the right rather than from the left. The Dixiecrat party was a sectional, single issue, splinter-type

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[7]John D. Hicks, "The Third Party Tradition," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XX (June, 1933-March, 1934), 27-28.

[8]Emile B. Ader, The Dixiecrat Movement: Its Role in Third Party Politics (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1955), p. 5. Hereinafter referred to as Ader, The Dixiecrat Movement.

party.[9] Furthermore, it hailed the beginning of a new political form in the United States, "the organized party within a party, or a satellite party." This meant "something more than a pressure group, something less than full-fledged parties waging an independent campaign."[10]

This uncertain status of the dissenters caused a confusion that pervaded the life of the movement. Like third parties, the States' Righters usually had little of the structural strength that the major parties had, and as their movement progressed the lack of local foundations emerged as a prime weakness. The Dixiecrats served primarily to promote a minority viewpoint, a factor which limited its appeal. Because the party was sectional, neither major party could afford to support its cause without losing some support in non-southern regions.[11]

This sectionalism was a charge repeatedly denied by the Dixiecrats, yet there was little doubt concerning their geographical limitations. The States' Righters always disliked the term "Dixiecrat" which gave a definite sectional label to the party without expressing the principles of the cause. They preferred States' Rights Democrats or States' Righters as their official name.[12] With time the term

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[9] Ibid., pp. 2-3.

[10] Hesseltine, Third Party Movements, p. 97.

[11] Heard, A Two Party South? p. 31.

[12] "Newsletter," Longview, Texas, Merritt Gibson Papers.

"Dixiecrat," as used by the press, became one of derision. Bill Weisner, telegraph editor of the Charlotte News, coined the term when he was writing a headline for a story on the SRD's and discovered that the word would fit nicely there. Weisner thought of using the initials "SRD," but said it might be interpreted as "Standing Room for Democrats" or something comparable.[13] According to Strom Thurmond of South Carolina that label "puts the States' Rights Democrats behind the eight ball in other sections of the Nation" and in fact was a "5-yard penalty in talking to the voters of the north, the Midwest and Far West."[14] The States' Righters eventually became accustomed to the satire and adverse publicity that they received at the hands of the press, and only the most reactionary newspapers in the country supported their cause.

While most southerners appeared to be solely concerned with the civil rights program of Truman, there were other issues that contributed to the southern revolt. Among these were ownership of the tidelands, the southern heritage, the declining importance of the South in national politics, the changing ideology of the Democratic party, the increasing centralization of the federal government, and the changing southern economic situation. With all the

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[13]The Charlotte News (Charlotte, North Carolina), September 3, 1948.

[14]Clipping, unfiled, Gibson Papers.

attention paid by southerners to social and political issues, the economic issues, as significant but not so immediately evident, were not as widely publicized.

To some southerners, however, economic issues were of the utmost importance. Southwestern promoters of natural oil and gas concerns feared that Truman's determination to regulate their enterprises would cut into their profits. TVA competition and the possibility of further similar government projects frightened private electric power interests. And the biggest uproar occurred in 1947 when the Supreme Court awarded control over the tidelands oil wells to the federal government. Oil companies immediately began campaigning for congressional action to return the tidelands to state regulation.

The tidelands oil controversy was an argument between the federal government and several individual states over the question of possession of the tidelands and their rich mineral resources. The definition of tidelands in a technical sense is that part of the shore that lies between high and low tide, but, in this controversy, it refers to lands under the marginal seas, that is, three nautical miles out from the shore toward the sea. This dispute first arose around the turn of the century when oil was discovered off the coasts of California, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Florida. The states in question promptly began leasing these mineral rights to private oil companies and it was not

until fifteen years or so later that the federal government began to question the right of the states to do this.

During the 1930's the states fought the claims of the federal government to the submerged lands but the controversy remained unsettled well beyond the Truman administration. In 1946 Congress passed a law, vetoed by Truman, designating state ownership of the tidelands. And the United States Supreme Court in United States vs. California in 1947 supported the administration's position by awarding the tidelands to the federal government.

By 1948 Congress was again considering a bill vesting the title of tidelands to the states. Proponents of the bill feared that if the doctrine of "paramount rights" of the federal government prevailed in this case, it would become possible for the federal government legally to confiscate other lands. The States' Righters saw in the tidelands decision "an alarming doctrine" by which the federal government "could take away these lands without reimbursement to anyone, therefore, regardless of investments made in developing such lands."[15]

The fate of the tidelands became a political issue in the election of 1948. The Republicans and the Dixiecrats favored state control of the tidelands while the Democrats made no statement at all concerning the matter. Opponents of the 1948 bill in Congress charged that oil

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[15] States' Righter, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 6.

lobbyists, prepared to spend millions of dollars, were hard at work in the so-called oil "grab." This charge of lobbying by the oil companies was true enough, but it was also true that lobbying against the bill occurred. Opposition to the bill stemmed mostly from the federal administration, the National Grange, and oil companies that wanted leases from the United States government. The states wanted only to control the mineral rights, not the operational facets of the area such as navigation, commerce, or national defense.[16]

Several influential southern Democrats viewed the topic of the tidelands initially with great concern. Since Texas was one of the states most directly affected by this issue, the governor, Buford Jester, was deeply troubled by the possible consequences of federal control of the tidelands. Jester saw Truman's efforts at confiscating the tidelands as "another dangerous blow aimed at states' rights and local self-government."[17] The extension of the federal government's actions in this matter, Jester said, would eventually result in the nationalization of all the industries in the country. Since a large part of the millions of dollars grossed by the state of Texas from the tidelands was spent for public education,

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[16] Congressional Digest (October, 1948), pp. 229-30.

[17] Speech, Buford Jester, April 20, 1948, Folsom Papers, Democratic Party File.

the withdrawal of this monetary source would jeopardize the future of the public school system.[18] If oil in the interior was to be ruled by the same doctrine of federal dominion, then it would lead to the nationalization of all the important natural resources and industries of the states. To Jester this was an attack on "state sovereignty as much as state property."[19]

Senator Tom Connally of Texas strongly supported the state's position on the issue of the tidelands.[20] Resolutions from almost all of the counties in Texas were sent to Senator Connally in support of the Texas title to the offshore minerals.[21] That the people of Texas saw in the issue a threat to one of the biggest sources of income is evident by the volume of mail received by Connally. The Texas State Teachers Association distributed materials warning of the dire consequences that would follow should Texas lose the tidelands money.[22] Although most Texans appeared to be quite concerned over

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Speech, Buford Jester, December 14, 1948, Columbia, South Carolina, South Carolinian Library, J. Strom Thurmond Papers, Correspondence In File.

[20] Letter, Tom Connally to Edward Crane, March 26, 1948, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Tom Connally Papers, Tidelands File.

[21] Resolutions, Connally Papers, Tidelands File.

[22] "The Tidelands: A Heritage of Texas' Public Schools," Connally Papers, Tidelands File.

the issue, their concern did not manifest itself in the election of 1948, when Truman easily won the electoral vote in Texas. Even Governor Jester, who spoke repeatedly on the issue, failed to support the political parties that favored state ownership of the tidelands.

Representatives from other states were also concerned about the tidelands issue. Gessner T. McCorvey, chairman of the state Democratic party of Alabama, called it a program "to make Washington richer and the States poorer."[23] If the coastal states should be deprived of their natural resources and the money be used for educational purposes in all the states, then, he reasoned, it follows that all the other states should divide all their natural resources with the coastal states as well. McCorvey saw this as another in a long line of efforts to "center everything in Bureaucratic Washington to the exclusion of the powers of the Several States. . . ."[24]

Truman's stand on the issue was made clear: money from that resource "ought to go to people and not to a few oil millionaires."[25] As early as September 28, 1945, he issued two proclamations and two Executive Orders to the effect that the United States had control over the natural resources of the continental shelf. He then asked the

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[23]McCorvey, "A States' Rights Democrat."

[24]Ibid.

[25]Truman, Papers, p. 228.

Attorney General to sue the state of California in a test case in which the United States Supreme Court in 1947 upheld the federal government's "dominant rights" to this area of resources. This decision was reaffirmed in principle two other times by the court in 1950.[26]

By 1952 enough support had been harnessed in Congress to pass a bill again giving the states ownership of the tidelands. Truman once again vetoed the bill. In 1953 President Eisenhower signed the Submerged Lands Act which divided the tidelands mineral resources between the state and federal government in such a manner as to favor the claims of the states. The submerged coastal lands within the historic boundaries of the states, three miles for Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi and three leagues for Texas and Florida, were awarded to the states. Federal jurisdiction was granted beyond these boundaries. In 1960 the Supreme Court in three decisions upheld this ruling.

This controversy over the tidelands gave birth to the conspiracy thesis, a name given it by the press. Adherents of this theory maintained that the Dixiecrats had no sincere interest in states' rights but were mere puppets acting on behalf of the oil interests. To support this contention they cited the South's support of such centralized programs as R.E.A., T.V.A., federal road programs,

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[26]Truman, Memoirs, II, 480-87.

public works, subsidies to farmers, flood control, school lunch programs, and numerous other similar federal projects, all of which were totally antithetical to the southern interpretation of states' rights.[27] Courier-Journal staff writer, John Ed Pearce surmised that states' rights was really a cover up for what he called more "sinister interests," namely opposition to blacks and support of state ownership of the tidelands. Other political journalists even went so far as to claim that civil rights was a cover up for the single real issue--the fate of the tidelands.[28] According to the conspiracy thesis the oil men used the Dixiecrats as a means of amassing great wealth and power for themselves at the expense of national interest. The value of the tidelands oil, estimated at thirty billion dollars, was no small matter.[29]

The southern conservative oligarchy, once made up of planters, now consisted of utility executives, textile men, industrialists, bankers, and the oil barons, a group whose money filled the coffers of the Dixiecrat party. According to journalist Stewart Alsop, they were responsible for the tidelands issue receiving "at least as much attention at the various Dixiecrats' get-togethers as the civil rights

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[27] Courier-Journal (Louisville, Kentucky), October 13, 1948.

[28] St. Louis Post Dispatch, August 18, 1948.

[29] Ibid., August 19, 1948.

issue."[30] It is unknown exactly how much the oil men contributed to the Dixiecrats or their reasons for doing so. Men like H. R. Cullen, wealthy Houston oil executive, along with the Humble Oil company allegedly were especially generous to the Dixiecrat campaign chest.[31] Cullen, who earlier received a considerable amount of publicity due to his donation of $160,000,000 to Texas charity, played a prominent part in the Dixiecrat saga. When the Dixiecrat convention was held in Houston, Cullen supplied a private plane for the use of the Dixiecrat Presidential candidate and a special train to Houston for Mississippi Dixiecrats.[32]

Thomas Sancton, a political analyst, contended that the Dixiecrat movement was supported by "all the investing and managing communities, from the southern industrial metropolis to Old Man Johnson's 'furnish' store at the unnamed crossroads." The states' rights revolt in Mississippi was a kind of "political pilot plant for the large corporations."[33]

To give substance to the oil conspiracy thesis, Alsop cited a story about Ellis Arnall, former Governor of Georgia. Arnall stayed at an expensive hotel in New Orleans while attending a Sugar Bowl game and found to his

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[30] New York Herald Tribune, October 20, 1948.

[31] "Political Notes," Newsweek, September 6, 1948, p. 9.

[32] New York Herald Tribune, October 20, 1948.

[33] Sancton, "White Supremacy," p. 97.

surprise as he attempted to pay his bill that it had already been paid by the Mississippi Power and Light Company. Upon questioning the clerk he found that she had mistaken him for Governor Fielding Wright of Mississippi.[34]

In late August, the Democratic National Committee reported that Texas oil men had been plotting a southern revolt against Truman, not over civil rights, but over the tidelands issue. Civil rights was merely a facade. Not having access to the actual list of financial contributors, the Democratic National Convention claimed to have information proving that Texas oil men were the heaviest contributors to the Dixiecrat cause. The Democratic National Convention charged, though without substantiation, that these Texas oil men were "placing their private interests above party loyalty."[35]

One columnist, viewing the oil men as selfish exploiters and manipulators of the Dixiecrats, saw that party "prostituting the ideal of states' rights to a purpose that is beneath them and against the country's security."[36] He felt that while the states' rights doctrine was initially sound, it later became the "refuge of predatory interests."[37] The columnist defined a states' righter

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[34] New York Herald Tribune, October 20, 1948.

[35] St. Louis Post Dispatch, August 18, 1948.

[36] Ibid., August 19, 1948

[37] Ibid.

as "a pleader for a special interest who craves the power that is being exercised by a progressive opponent."[38]

Another supporter of the conspiracy thesis was Charles G. Hamilton, leader of the loyalist forces (true Democrats) in Mississippi. He claimed that the intention of the oil lobbyists was to secure the election of Dewey. Hamilton, who saw civil rights as an excuse or cover up for the real issue, pointed out that Governor Fielding Wright of Mississippi had announced opposition to Truman even before Truman had delivered his civil rights message.[39]

Such charges as these made by Hamilton were not isolated or infrequent. Others charged that the oil interests were concerned only with ensuring a Republican victory.[40] Adherents of this belief, however, did not explain why the oil men did not simply support the Republican party which advocated state ownership of the tidelands.

These charges of conspiracy were answered by the Dixiecrat leaders such as Fielding Wright who denied that tideland interests had contributed at all. He said they "have not contributed one dime to our fight."[41] It seems that while there was some validity to this statement, a modification of it would have been closer to the truth.

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Letter, Charles Hamilton to author, March 4, 1970.

[40] St. Louis Post Dispatch, August 20, 1948.

[41] Commercial Appeal (Memphis, Tennessee), July 21, 1948.

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Strom Thurmond, Governor of South Carolina, explained that he knew nothing whatsoever about oil interests contributing to the states' rights fund. Thurmond echoed Wright in maintaining that not a single dime had been contributed and added that representatives of the oil interests had made no suggestions at all concerning party policies. On tidelands, Thurmond said, the party considered their ownership to be a matter for the states to decide upon, just as civil rights legislation should be a matter for the states. Thurmond charged that anybody who accused the States' Rights movement of having intentions other than those of protecting the Constitution "must undoubtedly be attempting to smear our movement."[42] Accusations and rebuttals over the role of tidelands in the Dixiecrat party were exchanged continually throughout the campaign period and afterwards, without ever reaching a consensus.

The tidelands issue alone, controversial and vulnerable as it was, never could have led to the formation of southern factions within the Democratic party. While it is true that Wright opposed the Truman Administration prior to the public release of the civil rights report, most of Wright's opposition centered around the anticipated suggestions concerning civil rights. There was a

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[42]Telegram, J. Strom Thurmond to John Temple Graves, July 26, 1948, Thurmond Papers, Correspondence Out File.

considerable time lapse between the date the Civil Rights Commission Report was completed, October, 1947, and the date of Truman's civil rights message to Congress in February, 1948. The report was available for those who cared to read it and Wright was one who did. A few others read the report but the southern reaction to it as a whole was subdued. Possibly Truman was using this interim period to test the southern response. Finding it reasonably calm, he proceeded with his recommendations to Congress on the subject.

From all the speeches and private utterances of Wright on the subject of civil rights, there is no doubt but that this was his major objection to the Democratic party. He and his supporters received contributions from the oil men but there is no evidence to substantiate the existence of a conspiracy of any type. Both Wright and Thurmond continually denied the charges that they had knowingly received money from the oil people; however, their categorical denials of <u>any</u> contributions from these sources are hardly credible. The Dixiecrats did receive the support of many oil men; one need only to consult their list of party workers to verify this. But if oil men contributed heavily to the Dixiecrat movement, they did not contribute heavily enough. With such vast quantities of money on hand, as the advocates of the conspiracy thesis would draw the picture, it seems that they would

have provided a greater opportunity for success than that experienced by the debt-ridden Dixiecrats.

It was the lack of funds for organizational and promotional activities that continually plagued the Dixiecrat movement.[43] Large numbers of southern sympathizers received letters stating that the party still owed a considerable amount of money, and as Laney wrote in letter after letter, "I thought maybe you would like to help us by a reasonable donation to pay off the debt we still have."[44]

The tidelands question was not discussed by the Dixiecrat leaders, nor was it mentioned in the Dixiecrat literature or at party rallies nearly as much as was civil rights. Speeches by the leaders and minutes of their meetings disprove beyond doubt this contention. Numerous meetings occurred without the tidelands' question being mentioned at all and even if it were touched upon in campaign speeches, the tidelands issue never appeared as the central point of the messages. The ordinary southern citizen, especially in states not on the Gulf coast, in all likelihood did not understand the tidelands issue nor feel that it would affect him. On the other hand, the ideas and

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[43]Merritt Gibson, private interview, April, 1970, Longview, Texas and Ben Laney, private interview, April, 1970, Magnolia, Arkansas.

[44]Letter, Ben Laney to Allen Patterson, December 14, 1948, Laney Papers, Dixon File.

implementation of the civil rights program, so many believed, would have an immediate and personal effect.

The significance of the tidelands issue, then, in leading to the southern bolt in 1948 is questionable. Interpretors of the issue range from those who felt it the only real issue to those who would discount its significance altogether. The middle of the road approach, that is, admitting that it was an issue, but certainly not the chief issue, seems most plausible.

Of the other issues that were involved in the bolt, the growing concept of the welfare state must be considered. Although many businessmen of the South were antagonistic toward this trend, numerous other southerners enjoyed the benefits of liberal economic programs too much to launch a vigorous attack against the administration on these grounds alone. According to G. T. McCorvey, Alabama Dixiecrat leader, the states' rights movement was a result of the "wasteful expenditure of public funds . . . a result of the creation of countless Federal jobs for the 'Faithful" . . . a result of the almost unbearable tax burden."[45] The sheer number of the New Deal and Fair Deal programs frightened conservatives. Yet these programs did evoke different responses from southern economic and social interests, and thus helped to break down the regional homogeneity that had been so significant in maintaining the Solid South.

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[45]McCorvey, "A States' Rights Democrat."

With the disappearance of the old agricultural system the South no longer had unique regional economic interests that separated it from the rest of the nation.[46] While economic changes brought increasing industrialization and greater diversification of agricultural production to the South, they simultaneously began an erosion of the unity of the historically Solid South. Along with industrialization, labor unions began making inroads into the South, creating a new basis for political cohesiveness. Growing urbanization in the South and the corresponding decline in the rural areas led to the creation of new social classes not unlike those of the North.[47] The way was clearly open now for new economic interests to express themselves through some type of political action.

The continuous and seemingly unending growth of the federal government paved the way for tradition-bound southerners to raise their old battle cry of states' rights. Some protesters, such as Ben Laney, pictured themselves as being genuinely interested in preserving certain powers for the states. However, it appears that behind this interest lay a desire to use such powers for the purpose of maintaining the status quo in the South. While there were probably some Dixiecrats who supported the ideal of states'

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[46]Heard, A Two Party South? p. 154; and H. C. Nixon, "Southern Regionalism Limited," Virginia Quarterly Review, XXVI (Spring, 1940), 161-70.

[47]Heard, A Two Party South? pp. 154-56.

rights apart from the civil rights question, it is difficult if not impossible to make such a distinction. For the most part, Dixiecrats used states' rights as a cover up for the real issue: civil rights.

Although the Dixiecrat leaders capitalized on the South's fear of the Negro, as politicians from decades before had done, some of the Dixiecrats attempted to avoid outright insults to blacks. As one editorial explained of Thurmond, he always "tiptoes around the issue, like an old-fashioned father trying to explain sex to his son without saying the words."[48] Staff writer John Ed Pearce characterized Thurmond in this manner: "he creeps up close to the issue, sidles in with an innuendo, and then eases past the danger point with a side-step and a show of studious piety."[49] Thurmond never had to utter a gross word, but his audience knew exactly what he meant. Although Thurmond was not the classic race-hater, without his appeal to white supremacists, his program would never have gotten off the ground. Thurmond knew segregation to be wrong morally but neither could he accept integration as a way of life. As one reporter wrote, "he is torn, . . . between a desire to be a decent Christian man, and an inner insistence on a racial system that is, in itself, un-Christian."[50]

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[48] Louisville Courier-Journal, October 16, 1948.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

The Dixiecrats were interested in preserving the status quo, that is, to "keep the Negro in his place" and in order to do that it was necessary to adhere to the one-party system. Yet the Dixiecrats attacked this very party hoping to mold it to their own ideology, which they claimed was the traditional philosophy of the Democratic party. They labeled the Democratic party the "nigger" party in an attempt to discredit its venerable position in the South.[51]

While some of the objectives of the Dixiecrats were obvious, other less apparent should also be noted. According to political scientist Helen Fuller, the major objectives of the Dixiecrats were to bring about a re-alignment of political parties and to bring the two-party system to the South, while the defeat of Truman was actually of minor significance.[52] With the establishment of the two-party system in the South, the Democratic party would be forced by the competition to be more responsive to southern needs. Then if the South became too disenchanted with the Democrats, the switch to the Republican party might be less painful. This thesis is debatable at best. Most Dixiecrat supporters would have been satisfied with directing the Democratic party into more conservative channels. While

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[51]Samuel Lubell, The Future of American Politics (3d rev. ed.; New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 126.

[52]Helen Fuller, "The New Confederacy," New Republic, CXIX (November 1, 1948), 10; and Carter, "Civil Rights Issue," p. 53.

the demise of the one-party South may have been hastened by the Dixiecrats, there is no evidence that this was their conscious objective.

The Dixiecrats employed various tactics in order to accomplish their aims. First they sent a committee to protest to the national chairman of the Democratic party, and secondly they filibustered in Congress against "anti-Southern legislation." When all minor means of protest failed, the Dixiecrats turned towards the idea of forming a separate party with their own candidates. By 1948, defeat for the Democrats seemed to be a certainty; consequently, the South had nothing to lose in the way of patronage by bolting.[53] To dissatisfied southern leaders this appeared to be a propitious time to voice their protest. Perhaps, after the election, southern Democrats could help rebuild a Democratic party with a more conservative flavor. If the South were given a larger role in the Democratic party, it would be able to delay, if not end, "anti-Southern" legislation, that is, more specifically, the civil rights programs.[54]

Few southerners, if any, seriously considered the possibility of the Dixiecrat party winning the election

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[53]Richard Hofstadter, "From Calhoun to the Dixiecrats," Social Research: An International Quarterly of Political and Social Science, XVI (June, 1949), 143.

[54]"New South: A Political Phenomenon Grips Dixie's Voter," Newsweek, October 25, 1948, p. 32. Hereinafter referred to as "New South: A Political Phenomenon."

in 1948. It has been suggested, however, by Merritt Gibson, National Campaign Chairman of the SRD, that at times Thurmond acted as if he actually believed he might win the presidency. During one of Thurmond's campaign speeches, a worker in the Dixiecrat party remarked to Gibson about Thurmond's attitude, "That damned fool really thinks he's going to be elected!"[55]

If a party defeat was necessary for the South to be able to assert itself again, then Truman and the Democratic party would have to suffer. Henry Wallace, the Progressive candidate, and the Dixiecrats in a sense worked for the same result--the defeat of the Democrats. Wallace withdrew from the Democratic party early in the year and established the Progressive party, independent of the Democratic party. The Dixiecrats, on the other hand, remained within the party and worked to reform the composition of the Democrats. They finally established a separate party, but only as a last resort. The states' righters hoped that Thurmond would receive enough electoral votes to throw the election into the House, then the South could bargain with both parties and give her votes to the one willing to make the most concessions to her region. To win the presidency, a candidate had to have 266 electoral votes and the South only had 127 electoral votes.

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[55]Merritt Gibson, Interview.

In the Dixiecrat strategy it was thought that the Republicans would carry California with its twenty-five votes since that state's governor, Earl Warren, was on the ticket. Ohio with twenty-five votes would go Republican due to the prestige of Senator Taft, and Illinois would give its twenty-eight votes to the Republicans. With any two of these states going Republican the election would be thrown into the House. If just one of those states went Republican and if the SRD carried Texas with its twenty-three votes, the election would be decided in the House. Or, if Illinois were to go Republican and one of these four southern states, Virginia with eleven votes, Georgia with twelve, North Carolina with fourteen, or Tennessee with ten were to vote Dixiecrat, the House would decide.[56]

Dixiecrats reasoned that if the election were thrown to the House and if the majority of the state delegations were Democratic, it would be a question of Truman or Thurmond. Republican Congressmen would never have voted for Truman, so their conservative votes would have to be cast for Thurmond, assuming they operated by the same logic as the Dixiecrats. The behind-the-scenes strategy that the Dixiecrats hoped to execute was that of taking over the name and machinery of the Democratic party in the southern states. This strategy and the fact that

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[56]McCorvey, "A States Rights Democrat."

it was sometimes successful makes it difficult to classify the Dixiecrats as a third party movement. In the states of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina, the Dixiecrats managed to have the regular Democratic electors pledged to Thurmond. So in these states those who cast their votes for the Democrats were not really voting for the Democrats at all, but for the Dixiecrats. The Dixiecrats explained that the Confederate character of the Democratic party enabled any state organization to secede, if it so desired. Then it could vote for whomever it chose.

Therefore, in a sense the real struggle in 1948 occurred within the states on the battle of deciding which electors would be representative of which party label. As Alexander Heard, political scientist, explains, "the significant competition engendered by the Dixiecrats thus occurred <u>within</u> the Democratic party rather than <u>with</u> it."[57]

Although the aims, objectives and strategy of the Dixiecrat party gave insight into the character of the party, the ideology of the movement truly reflected this character. The ideology and origins of the States' Rights movement had its roots in the Reconstruction period. Both supporters and critics of the movement have compared with varying degrees of likeness the 1860's and the 1940's.

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[57]Heard, A Two Party South? p. 23.

The new secession movement found its John C. Calhoun in the person of Charles Wallace Collins, a member of the Alabama bar. His book Whither Solid South was a prolonged discussion of white supremacy, Negro inferiority, and a moral and religious defense for continued segregation. According to Fuller, this ". . . second-rate book by an unknown author became the 'Mein Kampf' of a new movement because it appeared at the strategic moment."[58]

Senator James Eastland, the first Dixiecrat leader to discover the book, immediately sent a copy of it to Fielding Wright, the newly elected Governor of Mississippi. Wright was apparently quite taken by Collins' ideas; and in his inaugural address "the voice was that of the Governor of Mississippi but the thought came from Whither Solid South?"[59] Eastland and Wright, convinced of the value of the book to their cause, proceeded to distribute copies of it first to the key Dixiecrat leaders and later to the public.[60] Collins' ideas are easily identifiable in the movement and in the speeches of the leaders.

Charles Wallace Collins was very much a product of his background. He was born in 1879 and grew up on a cotton plantation in the black belt of Alabama. After

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[58]Fuller, "The New Confederacy," p. 11.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Letter, Frank M. Dixon to Charles Collins, August 18, 1948, Dixon Papers, States Rights Correspondence File.

graduating from the University of Chicago, he served as law librarian of Congress and as an attorney for some of the largest financial institutions in the nation. It was in hopes of arousing southerners to unite and to fight off this New Deal-Fair Deal attack on southern civilization that he wrote his book delineating the political position of the South as he saw it in 1947. Collins stressed three main points throughout his book: his interpretation of the Reconstruction era in American history, the events of 1936 which served to reduce further the influence of the South in the political life of the nation, and his explanation of the forthcoming civil rights report. Central to all of these points was his interpretation that blacks, little better than animals, should be driven from the country. He also suggested a means by which the South could enhance its political position.

His interpretation of Reconstruction, like that of historian Walter Fleming, emphasized the harshness of the radical Republican rule that was imposed upon the South. He focused attention on the "fact" that the fourteenth amendment was illegal and unconstitutional in that it was never formally ratified by the southern states but rather was forced upon them.[61] Practically all that Collins said about the Reconstruction period can be found in the various

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[61]Charles Wallace Collins, Whither Solid South? (New Orleans: Pelican Press, 1947), p. 94.

speeches of the party leaders. Rarely was a SRD speech given without reference to the historic wrongs to which the South had been subjected since Civil War days.

The next critical period which Collins saw as of major importance to the South was the upsetting year, 1936, the year in which the two-thirds rule was abrogated. Just as annoying in the same year the Negro vote in the North went over to support the Democratic party. The third adverse development was the rise of "left-wing organized labor as an important influence in the Democratic party."[62] While all these forces were working to destroy "constitutional government" in America, there was also the FEPC, which Collins characterized as a gestapo designed to interfere with the private lives of the people. This was another of his ideas which was capitalized upon by the leaders of the SRD.

Writing before the Civil Rights Committee issued its report, he anticipated and denounced its suggestions, calling the report a political campaign document for 1948.[63] Collins, bitterly opposed to any ideas that would benefit the Negro, denounced Gunnar Myrdal's American Dilemma as worthless propaganda.[64] At the same time Collins defended white supremacy completely:

> . . . the Negro south of the Sahara today [is] in the same condition as he was thousands of years ago --a savage, living in the most primitive condition

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[62] Ibid., p. 252. [63] Ibid., p. 233. [64] Ibid., p. 57.

> under his ancient tribal organization. As a race, he learned nothing from the long years of the sojourn of the civilized white man on his shores. He created no written language and no literature. He built no cities. Out from his great rivers no ships ladened with treasure sailed in commerce to other lands. On his seacoast he built no harbors. Underneath the ground he trod, with spear in hand, were the world's most priceless minerals and precious stones. It remained for the white man to exploit them, and he used the Negro as his laborer to accomplish it.[65]

He saw nothing contradictory about labeling the slave owner as Christian and the black as subhuman, totally irresponsible and unfit to be a citizen. White supremacy to Collins was a "practical doctrine to enable the white people of the South to live in contact with large numbers of Negroes without the loss of the identity of their ancient culture and their racial purity."[66]

Nor was Collins lacking in proposals to solve the problems that plagued the South. As for the race problem he made a vague proposal that the United States buy from Africa a large area of land, which the United States would annex for the purpose of creating a forty-ninth state, a totally black state. Movement to this state would be completely voluntary--that is, if a black man wished to participate in the privileges of citizenship and human dignity he could move to this state or otherwise not be accorded these rights. Since only blacks would live there, Collins reasoned that they would have a better chance to

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[65] Ibid., p. 22.

[66] Ibid., p. 40.

take part in governmental and civic operations, a process which would somehow guarantee the growth of democracy. In his request of a minimum area of 300,000 square miles of non-desert land he said that "such a movement would be comparable to the opening of virgin territory like that of California and Texas in the 1840's."[67]

To solve the political dilemma of the South, Collins suggested the creation of a southern party, which would not have a "regional but a national connotation." He suggested a name consisting of not more than three words, "States' Rights" being two of the three. For organization, he noted the necessity of creating a regional committee to become the national committee with a representative from each state. Within the individual state another such committee should exist, along with a States' Rights club in each county seat. There should be frequent meetings and discussions along with regional and state annual conventions to inform the public of the ideas or goals of the party. Collins recognized the necessity of having a headquarters established in Washington, D.C., the nerve center of the nation, a paid professional staff, and an official publication of the party, later established as "The States' Righter."[68] These suggestions made by

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[67] Ibid., p. 315.

[68] "Outline of a Plan for a States' Rights Organization," Laney Papers, Southern Governors Conference File.

Collins in 1947 eventually were incorporated into the SRD movement.

In a later essay Collins explained the immediate cause of the revolt as Truman's civil rights program and the strong civil rights plank. He saw the two national parties as attempting to establish a system of national planning for everything and everybody, a move that would totally destroy states' rights.[69] Certain groups were also working to destroy the "American way." Among these groups were the NAACP, or in Collins' words, "unorganized professional Negroes," Jewish Communists who were the "most potent force behind the Negro movement," other Jewish societies, the CIO and to some extent the AF of L, the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, the National Negro Congress, and various Protestant and Catholic groups. Collins saw in this fight that the "stake for the South is no less than the whole fabric of the Southern civilization."[70] The ideology of States' Rights Democrats as outlined by Collins was primarily an elaboration of white supremacy. Although he briefly mentioned New Deal economics, this was not the thrust of his work nor was this an aspect adopted by the Dixiecrat leaders.

The informal ideology of the movement can best be seen in the speeches and writings of the key people in the

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[69] Letter, Charles Collins to Merritt Gibson, October 19, 1948, Gibson Papers.

[70] Ibid.

SRD party. McCorvey and Thurmond frequently referred to their beliefs in states' rights, home rule, and local self-government as being provided for in the tenth amendment: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."[71] Opposition to a strong centralized bureaucratic government was repeatedly emphasized.[72] Laney expressed the same idea by saying that the old Democratic party stood for the "preservation of individual freedom and liberty and also for the retention of certain rights to and for the states."[73]

One supporter termed the southern action a "fundamental" revolt, with a "cause that disturbs the deepest emotions of the human fabric--racial pride, respect for white womanhood, and superiority of Caucasian blood."[74] An abundance of racist literature was distributed before, during and after the campaign. John U. Barr, a lawyer from New Orleans, issued a circular entitled "For White Men and Women Everywhere." This piece of propaganda and others similar to it did more damage than good to the

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[71]McCorvey, "A States' Rights Democrat."

[72]Letter, Ben Laney to Horace Wilkinson, April 12, 1948, Laney Papers, Governor Ben Laney File.

[73]Ibid.

[74]Letter, Sam Johnston to John Sparkman, July 3, 1948, Dixon Papers, States Rights Correspondence File.

cause they were attempting to defend.[75] Support of this type was responsible for driving the bolt forward.

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[75]"For White Men and Women Everywhere," Truman Library, Howard McGrath Papers, Civil Rights File.

CHAPTER IV

THE GROWING REVOLT

Even before President Truman delivered his message on civil rights to Congress, some southern leaders predicted that his statements and proposals, based on the "radical" report of his Committee on Civil Rights, would antagonize the South. In Mississippi, the state in which the largest number of blacks in the Union resided, the newly elected governor sounded the first note of alarm. In his inaugural address of January 20, Governor Fielding L. Wright warned the South of the President's intentions with regard to civil rights. He alerted Mississippians to the likely prospects of a program, soon to be thrust upon them, that would endanger the American way of life. The federal government, Wright said, as suggested in the civil rights report was already beginning a "campaign of abuse and misrepresentation" aimed at the South. Designs for forcing such schemes as the FEPC, anti-lynching legislation, anti-poll tax bills, and now the anti-segregation proposals were under consideration.[1]

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[1]National States' Rights Democrats Campaign Committee, "States' Rights Information and Speakers Handbook"

The governor, blind to the need for such drastic programs, described Mississippi and the South as outstanding examples of a place where two races live harmoniously together in a mutually beneficial way. If, by some small chance, problems did exist, each individual state was capable of handling it without the services of the federal government.[2] Hinting that a party break was imminent, Wright asserted that "vital principles and eternal truths transcend party lines, and the day is now at hand when determined action must be taken."[3] Thus Governor Wright, an unknown in national politics until he delivered this speech, initiated the States' Rights bolt from the Democratic party.[4]

Following Wright's address to the Mississippi legislature, Senator Eastland spoke to the same body, urging southern Democrats to consider withholding their electoral votes and, perhaps, even filling the White House with a southerner. The South, he urged, should at least be able to throw the election into the House.[5] Simultaneously, South Carolina legislators called upon southerners to re-examine closely their position in the party. While the

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(Jackson, Mississippi: National States' Rights Democrats Campaign Committee, 1948), p. 22. Hereinafter referred to as "Speakers Handbook."

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Commercial Appeal, February 8, 1948.

[5] New York Times, January 30, 1948.

idea of a revolt was not stated or even implied, South Carolina was informing the national party that it was unhappy with the FEPC, anti-poll tax, and the total civil rights program.[6]

Then in February, just as some southerners had feared, Harry Truman delivered his infamous message on civil rights. Senator Allen J. Ellender of Louisiana said bluntly, "If legislation of this character is passed, I know well that the South will bolt the Democratic party."[7] Other reactions to Truman's message have been covered in the previous chapter. It was hinted and hoped by many that Truman would not choose to run for the presidency in 1948. But on February 5, Truman confirmed what Howard McGrath, the Democratic National Chairman, had implied earlier: Truman would indeed run. Truman's conservative advisers, who feared the financial loss to the campaign should the South bolt, pleaded in vain with Truman to modify his civil rights proposals.[8] Newsmen, thinking that Truman would have a strategy to placate the South questioned him at a news conference on the possibility of selecting a southerner as his vice-president. Truman, however, replied bluntly that he had not given the matter much thought.[9]

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Fort Worth Press, February 4, 1948.

[8] Truman, Papers, p. 127.

[9] Ibid.

Meanwhile preparations for the annual Southern Governors Conference at Wakulla Springs, Florida, scheduled for February 7, were underway. Although the major purpose of the meeting was to draw up plans for regional schools in the South, some irate southerners took advantage of this opportunity to expose what they perceived to be the dangers of the civil rights program. Governor Wright proposed that the conference notify leaders of the national party that southerners would reject all efforts to enact any civil rights legislation. To publicize southern protest to Truman's program he urged a Southwide mass meeting for March 1 in Jackson. As Wright spoke, his suggestions became increasingly radical culminating in a fiery appeal to secede from the party. Under such leadership, the South could proceed to nominate a pro-southern presidential slate.

To Wright's chagrin no one would second his proposal. Choosing to remain calm the governors, with Wright as the only dissenter, adopted instead a resolution of Thurmond's, part of which suggested the appointment of a committee to investigate the matter further. And, further, to consider the findings of the southern investigative committee and to determine an appropriate course of action, Thurmond proposed that another conference be held within sixty days. He lamented that Truman was obviously indulging "in competitive bidding for the votes of small pressure groups" at the expense of the traditions and institutions of the

South.[10] As an example of the racial and economic progress in the South, Thurmond contended that the crime of lynching had practically disappeared and that southern Negroes were more prosperous than ever before. Furthermore, Thurmond deprecated Truman's program calling it a divisive force at a time when the unstable international situation made national unity vital.

At the conclusion of the conference the governors agreed to appoint such a committee for the purpose of gathering information and conferring with the Democratic national chairman. In forty days the southern governors were to convene again to hear the results of the report. Thurmond as chairman of the committee to study the Truman program, requested that southern congressmen form a committee similar to his to study the effects of civil rights in the various states. Subsequently, these representatives agreed to work in conjunction with the Southern Governor's Committee and meanwhile to oppose the Truman legislation.[11]

Thurmond and Wright agreed on many points but Wright consistently called for more radical policies than did Thurmond. The Jackson Daily News, mouthpiece for Wright, said there was no need for a committee but there was definite need for action. According to Wright, the governors,

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[10]Motion, February 7, 1948, Thurmond Papers, States Rights File.

[11]Telegram, W. M. Colmer to J. Strom Thurmond, February 20, 1948, Thurmond Papers, States Rights File.

already aware of the issues but fearful of political reprisals, appointed a committee out of "political cowardice." Wright described the southern governors as "having no more backbone than skinned bananas."[12]

By the end of the second week in February, all kinds of apocryphal tales concerning the civil rights program spread across the nation with surprising speed. Wishful thinking southerners told of Truman's intent to pacify the South by modifying his stand on civil rights. According to rumor he would omit the anti-segregation proposal but retain those proposals concerning anti-lynching and the anti-poll tax. When confronted with this rumor, Truman categorically denied it.

But the South, particularly sensitive at this time, provided a fertile ground for the origin and propagation of myths. The popularity of rumors was given impetus by the scheduling and later cancellation of a speaking engagement by J. Howard McGrath, National Chairman of the Democratic party, in Atlanta, Georgia, at the Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner. Southerners were warned that he might take advantage of the opportunity to try to sell the South on the civil rights program. As the date of the speech approached, southerners became increasingly nervous over the prospect of a lecture on the benefits of a nation-wide civil rights program. To avoid further misunderstanding, McGrath

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[12] Baltimore Sun, February 13, 1948.

explained that, while not recanting on any of his personal beliefs, he would refrain from speaking on any topic offensive to the South.[13] After much ado over an ordinarily trivial matter, McGrath, on February 16, cancelled his speaking engagement.

Apparently both parties had wished to be relieved of the commitment, and when Governor M. E. Thompson changed the date of the Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner from March fifth to March ninth, McGrath bowed out, claiming that he had a previous commitment for that date. This fact was later confirmed by the Washington bureau of the Providence Journal.[14] Ostensibly, the date had been changed because of an education convention scheduled for the fifth that would overload the hotels; actually, however, Thompson was giving McGrath a chance to step out gracefully and thus to avoid a possible intra-party conflict over civil rights. This incident, though unimportant in itself, was significant in that it revealed the explosive disposition of the South at this time.

By mid-February some visible moves within the Democratic party were being made to discourage the threatened southern bolt. The Democratic National Committee, after allowing the southerners to cool down somewhat, initiated

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[13] New York Times, February 10, 1948; and Washington Post, February 10, 1948.

[14] Providence Journal, February 17, 1948.

talks with the dissenters, but no agreement could be reached.[15] Because the South had long been a chief financial supported of the Democrats, one of the most serious results of the threatened southern bolt would be a decline in party funds.[16] However, Truman, when asked if he planned on having a conference with southerners, replied that he did not.[17]

From the South there were continued sporadic indications of rebellion. In Mississippi, Governor Wright, not disheartened in his efforts to galvanize the southern governors to action, called a mass meeting of Mississippians. On February 12, four thousand people gathered at Jackson where they sang Dixie, waved Confederate flags and adopted resolution after resolution. They resolved that the Mississippi state Democratic executive committee should issue a call for a meeting of "all true white Jeffersonian Democrats" for a future meeting again to be held at Jackson. Among the adopted resolutions regarding the necessity of preserving states' rights, there was one which specifically condemned the administration's efforts to control the tidelands. Perhaps this is one of the reasons for the accusation that the oil industry and not the Negro was the heart of the southern bolt. This body also

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[15] Washington Post, February 11, 1948.

[16] Ibid., February 13, 1948.

[17] Truman, Papers, p. 138.

articulated the threat of withholding the state's electoral votes if that were required to protect the states from federal encroachment. Even Hodding Carter, liberal editor from Mississippi, said that party leaders were relying too much on the federal government as a cure-all. In less sophisticated terms, Governor Wright said of the Democrats, "one certain way to get rid of rats is to let the ship sink, and those rats will desert."[18]

On March 1, the Mississippi Democratic executive committee met to continue planning for the southern revolt and to complete preparations for their nation-wide conference. The immediate state level task for the committee was to persuade all of Mississippi's delegates to the National Convention, as well as the presidential electors, to pledge themselves to a pro-states' rights and anti-civil rights position. In the event that a civil rights platform was adopted at the Democratic National Convention, the Mississippi delegates, according to the committee's proposals, were instructed to withdraw from the convention.[19]

In yet another display of defiance many southern Democrats cancelled their plans to attend the Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner in Washington, the annual fund raising event for the Democratic party. The reason for their cancellation was their unrestrained fear and premonition that

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[18] New York Times, February 13, 1948.

[19] Key, Southern Politics, pp. 331-32.

segregation would not be enforced. Senator Olin D. Johnston of South Carolina, his wife, and their party did not attend the function for fear of being seated next to a Negro. Nevertheless the $1,000 they paid for their table went into the Democratic campaign chest. National committee officials planned to fill all empty chairs but Johnston thwarted them by dispatching a former heavyweight boxer with the ten South Carolina tickets to prevent, by physical force if necessary, the national committee from filling the vacant South Carolina section. The officials then announced that the seats would remain empty. Johnston's purpose was "to create an illusion of effective division within the party."[20]

When McGrath, in his speech at the dinner, said that Truman would not compromise in his civil rights program the audience responded with mild cheers and applause.[21] When Truman spoke at the dinner, his only reference to the southern split came when he spoke of the "floogie bird," whose label read, "I fly backwards. I don't care where I'm going. I just want to know where I've been." His speech, however, drew no enthusiastic applause.[22]

In spite of the growing revolt most political observers dismissed the southern protest as nothing more than

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[20] New York Post, February 20, 1948.

[21] Providence Journal, February 23, 1948.

[22] "Democrats: Black Week," Time, March 1, 1948, p. 12.

a mere threat, and certainly not a break from the party. Nor was there any indication that the President was particularly worried about a revolt. But this indifferent attitude of the administration and the press did not discourage the southerners in the least. Mississippi had already begun raising funds. Some 250 people already had raised $61,500 toward their goal of $100,000 which was to be used to fight anti-southern legislation. Governor Wright explained "We want to kick out these birds who stole the party from us. We want to see the South revive the conservative Democratic party."[23]

To fulfill the assignment given to them at the Florida Southern Governor's Conference, the committee studying Truman's civil rights program interviewed Democrats from various parts of the South. This committee included Governor William Preston Lane, Jr., of Maryland, chairman of the Conference of Southern Governors; Governor J. Strom Thurmond, South Carolina, chairman of the Special Committee of Southern Governors; Governor R. Gregg Cherry of North Carolina; Governor Ben Laney of Arkansas; and Governor Buford H. Jester of Texas. After collecting the bulk of the necessary data, the committee questioned Senator McGrath on the real meaning of the civil rights program. McGrath at this meeting was barraged with questions, but the more important ones dealt with the anti-poll

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[23]New York Times, February 23, 1948.

tax, anti-lynching laws, the FEPC, segregation, the two-thirds rule, and the possibility of a southerner for the vice-presidency.

As the meeting progressed the questions the southerners asked McGrath degenerated into useless demands that should only have been directed at Congress or at the President. McGrath was requested to defend the constitutional basis of the anti-poll tax, anti-lynching, and the FEPC. He was asked if he would oppose segregation and the federal civil rights enforcement agency and if he would support restoration of the two-thirds rule and a states' rights program at the Democratic National Convention. To most of these demands and requests McGrath either answered negatively or equivocated. The cordial parley proceeded but with growing disaffection. McGrath resented the continual repetition of questions which would force him to speak for what the Congress or the President might do in the future. At the same time, the committee, considering many of McGrath's answers to be evasive and vague, became increasingly incensed.[24] In anger McGrath finally turned his back to the committee.[25] The only statement that could be construed as a possible compromise with the southern committee was McGrath's acknowledging his personal

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[24] Ibid., February 24, 1948.

[25] Ben Laney, Private Interview, Magnolia, Arkansas, April, 1970.

acceptance of the 1944 platform as being adequate for the 1948 campaign.[26] At the end of the interview, McGrath, speaking for the Democratic National Committee, said "We appreciate the great loyalty our party has had from the Southern States through the years. I don't take the attitude that they are with us anyway so the 'H' with them." He added that he hoped they could work out their differences soon.[27]

The Southern Governor's Committee, obviously dissatisfied with the results of their talk with McGrath, issued a statement expressing their contempt for the leadership of the Democratic party and warning that "the South is no longer 'in the bag.'" They announced that each southern state would utilize the most effective method of resisting the program of the Democratic party through a coordination of all the southern efforts in a general program.[28] The next day Thurmond and Laney talking to several southern Senators in the office of John L. McClellan informed the Senators of McGrath's refusal to compromise or recant any part of the Truman program.[29]

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[26]"The Revolt Grows," Newsweek, March 8, 1948, p. 18.

[27]Transcript of Conference of Southern Governors With J. Howard McGrath, February 23, 1948, McGrath Papers, Governors Conference of 1948 File.

[28]"Statement" by the Southern Governors' Committee, Thurmond Papers, States Rights File.

[29]"The Revolt Grows," p. 19.

They discussed the possibility of a nominee other than Truman but at that point made no specific suggestions.[30]

The first formally declared southern bolt by a Democratic organization over civil rights occurred at Jasper County, South Carolina, on February 23. At a meeting in Ridgland, H. Klugh Purdy, the head of the county's Democratic committee, spoke against "spineless party leaders seeking to destroy the South," and he supported a "declaration of independence for the South." His call to the South was for his fellowmen to "strike the match tonight that will set the South aflame." He then read his resolution which said there was no course left but to withdraw from the national party. They proceeded to do just that. At the back of the meeting hall was a large banner which read, "You can have her, we don't want her, she's too black for me."[31]

In Alabama as well as in Mississippi the campaign for selecting Democratic presidential electors and delegates got under way with a primary held May 4. Prominent states' rights leaders, Gessner T. McCorvey, and Horace Wilkinson, Birmingham attorney, with the support of the Democratic Executive State Committee, wanted those on the ballot pledged to vote against Truman or against anyone else who was pro-civil rights. Furthermore this committee

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[30] New York Times, February 25, 1948.

[31] "The Revolt Grows," p. 18.

asked the delegates to promise to bolt the convention should the platform include civil rights. At the conclusion of the primary and the run-off held on the first of June, the Alabama delegation was split in half: half agreed to walk out of the convention and the other half declared their intention to remain within the party regardless of the program adopted. Anti-bolters in Alabama included Senator Lister Hill, Governor J. E. Folsom, former Governor Chauncey Sparks, and Attorney General Albert Carmichael.[32]

As Democratic leaders began to explore the possibilities for peace within the party, they found the southerners staunchly wed to the idea of Truman's withdrawal and the omission of civil rights as the only solution. Truman's formal announcement to run for the presidency surprised no one nor did his uncompromising stand on the issue of civil rights. McGrath indicated that he would personally support a mild civil rights plank similar to the one adopted by the 1944 Democratic convention. Truman also, at one point, was willing to accept this. This plank was so vague in its reference to civil rights that it should not have been offensive to the South, but by this time Mr. Truman had become a personal issue with many southerners. Regardless of Democratic rhetoric to the contrary, the South

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[32]Key, Southern Politics, pp. 332-33.

knew beyond a doubt what Truman stood for.[33] Moderate southerners, still hoping to avoid a break with the Democratic party, made proposals from time to time to McGrath but nothing would satisfy the southern rebels short of secession from the party.[34]

On March 13, the southern governors representing six states with seventy-two electoral votes held a "little convention" just four blocks away from the White House. Those attending were Governors Fielding Wright, Mississippi; Buford Jester, Texas; James E. Folsom, Alabama; M. E. Thompson, Georgia; Strom Thurmond, South Carolina; and Ben Laney, Arkansas. Presiding over the conference was Governor Lane of Maryland who did so because of his post as chairman of the Southern Governors' Conference and not because of any interest in the movement. Claiming that his state convention was the only body authorized to make such commitments, he did not vote and took no active part in the meeting.[35]

At the meeting, the Southern Committee report on civil rights was presented. It began by stating that the purpose of the conference was to consider the problems of the southern states resulting from the civil rights program. Such policies as might be proposed from this program would

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[33] Providential Bulletin, March 5, 1948.

[34] Letter, Myron G. Blalock to J. Howard McGrath, Montgomery, Alabama, State Department of Archives and History, Marion Rushton Papers, Correspondence 1948 File.

[35] Washington Post, March 14, 1948.

mean a "major alteration in the division of governmental powers and sovereignty between the states and the federal government." The report proceeded to denounce the anti-poll tax, anti-lynching, and the whole of Truman's program in all-too-familiar rhetoric. Emphasis was placed, not on the issues themselves, but on the underlying states' rights principles.

The Conference of Southern Governors in Washington both repudiated the leadership of the Democratic party and recommended that southerners "fight to the last ditch to prevent the nomination of any candidate . . . who advocates such invasions of state sovereignty" as those proposed by the President.[36] The conference suggested that southern delegates fight for a positive statement for states' rights in the party platform, and, concluding the formal recommendations, they asked that southerners pledge their votes in the electoral college only to advocates of states' rights. Although these were the major recommendations, there were also suggestions concerning effective political action. Organizations at the state level were urged to send in resolutions expressing opposition to the civil rights program and to any candidates who support such a program, while delegates to the national convention were asked to work for the adoption of a states' rights plank

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[36]Report, Folsom Papers, Governors of Other States File.

at the convention, to oppose the Truman program and to support the restoration of the two-thirds rule.[37]

In this meeting southerners outlined a "pre-convention caucus." It would begin with a meeting of the southern delegations to be held in Philadelphia or Washington just two days prior to the July 12 national convention. At the caucus, plans for the fight in the convention would take form. Those who would attend the pre-convention caucus were delegates and alternates from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Tennessee, and Virginia.[38]

It was also suggested that, if necessary, a post-convention conference would be held at Birmingham where a presidential slate could be selected by the southern states. The decision to hold the Birmingham conference would hinge upon the developing of any one of the following three situations: if southern delegations were not seated; if Truman or someone who had not renounced the civil rights program was the nominee; or if the convention did not adopt a strong states' rights platform.[39]

As the outline of the revolt began to take shape, the Dixiecrats announced that the conference of the States'

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Resolution, Dixon Papers, Resolutions and Platforms 1948 File.

[39] Ibid.

Rights Democrats would meet on May 10, in Jackson, Mississippi. The purpose of this meeting was to formulate further the principles of states' rights and to plan future action necessary to the preservation of constitutional government.[40]

With the Democratic party split into so many segments, many southerners began to suggest compromise candidates such as General Dwight D. Eisenhower. To some southerners he represented the answer to the Russian problem and to others he was the solution to the Negro problem.[41] Marion Rushton of Alabama, one of Eisenhower's most devoted followers, presented his case for claiming that because he was a Texan with southern sympathies, he could win the South and because of his nation-wide following, he would re-unite the Democratic party. Rushton declared, "Eisenhower is our nominee. The man and the hour have met. Eisenhower is the man."[42] It was to counteract this Eisenhower boom that Truman made the formal announcement of his intention to run.[43]

The draft Eisenhower movement caused opposing dissident elements in the party to unite temporarily. Northern

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[40]Telegram, Arthur L. Adams to Ben Laney, Laney Papers, Ben Laney File.

[41]Telegram, Marion Rushton to Gessner McCorvey, Rushton Papers, Correspondence 1948 File.

[42]Letter, Marion Rushton to Gessner McCorvey, April 19, 1948, Rushton Papers, Correspondence 1948 File.

[43]Redding, Inside the Democratic Party, pp. 147-49.

liberals such as James Roosevelt saw in Eisenhower what they thought the Democratic party needed, a man who would not serve as a partisan President but would answer the call from the people of this country expressed in a spontaneous draft.[44] The draft Eisenhower movement was not easily killed. It persisted with great force down to the time of the Democratic convention.

Not all southerners were convinced of the desirability of General Eisenhower as a candidate. E. H. Ramsey, leader of the southern bolt in Florida, said that he was "the greatest threat to the South and may be the scheme finally adopted in an effort to break the southern bloc."[45] Leon W. Harris, a lawyer from Anderson, South Carolina, warned the South that since Eisenhower's political preference and politics were unknown he might be more radical than Truman. Besides, southerners felt, the South had its own men whose opinions were well known and were trustworthy, men such as Harry Byrd of Virginia.

In the meantime preparation for the May 10 meeting continued. Eight southern leaders met in Memphis on April 9, to plan procedure and policy for the All South meeting. Several points were agreed upon at the meeting:

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[44]Statement, July 6, 1948, Columbia, South Carolina, South Carolinian Library, Olin Johnston Papers, General Eisenhower File.

[45]Letter, E. H. Ramsey to Ben Laney, June 2, 1948, Laney Papers, Governor Ben Laney File.

Fielding Wright would serve as temporary Chairman; Ben Laney would be permanent Chairman; a lady from Dallas, Mrs. F. R. Carlton would serve as Secretary; Horace Wilkinson was to be Chairman of the Resolutions Committee; E. S. Lewis would be head of the Credentials Committee; and W. W. Wright, a wealthy wholesale grocer from Mississippi, was named head of Ways and Means and Floor Committees whose purpose was to see that order was preserved. Since no agreement could be reached on the keynote speaker, this choice was delegated to a committee comprised of Wright, Thurmond, and Laney.[46] As southern leaders continued plotting the course for rebellion, all of the South buzzed with excitement. Southerners from every corner of that region animatedly and often quite heatedly argued the political questions of the day.

The next phase in this budding revolt took place in Atlanta, Georgia, where a meeting was held to discuss the strategy and procedure to be followed by the southern states in their opposition to the Truman program. Those attending were southern Democratic state chairmen from South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Arkansas, Virginia, Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, Tennessee, and North Carolina.[47] Although nothing new of major importance

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[46]Letter, Arthur Adams to Ben Laney, April 9, 1948, Laney Papers, Governor Ben Laney File.

[47]Memorandum, William P. Baskin to Arthur Adams, Laney Papers, Governor Ben Laney File.

occurred here, the chain of events leading to the southern break away from the Democrats was strengthened.

The Gallup Poll of April 9 showed Truman's popularity in the South at an all time low. In the South, 82 per cent opposed Truman and his civil rights program, but most southerners supported his foreign policy, his anti-Russian attitude, and his Marshall Plan which they saw as thwarting the spread of Communism.[48] In spite of the polls Truman did not appear worried. He maintained that when a choice was made at the ballot box, southerners would vote for him rather than for his Republican opponent who would be running on a strong civil rights stand also. As the month of April passed, the White House heard less about the southern bolt, possibly because of the secrecy involved in some of the Dixiecrat planning meetings. Democrats in Congress reported that southern leaders recently had been making some overtures for peace; consequently, Truman concluded that only Alabama and possibly one other state would fail to vote Democratic in November.[49] Truman was counting on the South's fears of penalties and on party regularity to see him through the election.[50]

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[48]"Poll Among Southern Voters Finds Reversal in Attitude Toward President's Handling of His Job," Democratic National Committee Clipping File, Democratic Party-Dixiecrat Revolt, 1948-52, Truman Library.

[49]New York Times, May 7, 1948.

[50]Ibid., May 9, 1948.

Just before the major conference of southern Democrats was to convene, Governor Wright worked to set the tempo of the meeting by making an inflammatory anti-Negro speech broadcast live throughout Mississippi. In his diatribe he defended segregation in the South and compared it to the lack of kindness in the northern states. He concluded with a warning to Negroes:

> If any of you have become so deluded as to want to enter our hotels and cafes, enjoy social equality with the whites, then kindness and true sympathy requires me to advise you to make your home in some state other than Mississippi.[51]

Thus Wright succeeded in setting an appropriate mood for the proceedings of the next day.

The major roads into Jackson were draped with Confederate flags while the banners over the doors of the city auditorium read, "Welcome, States' Rights Democrats." Preparations for this day had been in the making by a full time working staff since March 20. The States' Righter, the periodical of the movement, had also begun publication by this time.[52] All that morning chartered buses arrived from Fort Worth, Dallas, Houston, Little Rock, Birmingham, and other southern cities.[53] All of the southern states were represented along with a few non-southern states.

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[51] Ibid., May 10, 1948.

[52] Louisville Courier-Journal, May 10, 1948.

[53] States' Righter, May, 1948.

The meeting began at 10:00 A.M. with 3,500 people in attendance. For some four hours "volunteer citizens," that is anyone who believed in states' rights and opposed civil rights, participated in the conference. To register one merely signed a card pledging himself to such beliefs.[54] Key suggests that the idea of "volunteer citizens" was decided upon because if only official delegates to the Democratic party were allowed to participate the turnout would have been embarrassingly small.[55] The mood of those in attendance ranged from ebullient enthusiasm to utter boredom. Only 150 spectators plus 500 of the 1,000 "delegates" stayed until all of the resolutions were adopted.[56]

As the convention opened, the group from Texas sang "The Eyes of Texas Are Upon You," after which they received "thunderous applause." After the invocation, the entire body sang "Dixie," then appropriately enough, Fielding Wright delivered the welcoming speech. Following Judge Hart Wilson of Birmingham who delivered the speech nominating Ben Laney as permanent chairman, Laney made the traditional criticisms of Truman, outlining the southern interpretation of the civil rights program in detail. He reiterated the "tragic" history of the South during and

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[54]Key, Southern Politics, p. 333.

[55]Ibid.

[56]New York Times, May 11, 1948.

following Reconstruction, but pointed out that if southerners wanted to justify segregation, they must admit it had not always given the Negro an equal opportunity. Negroes, he admitted, have been employed in the "least rewarding fields of work." While physical lynchings had disappeared, Laney said, those of a psychological nature still existed for the Negro. As for education and recreational facilities, here again the South had fallen down in its job. His plea was for the South to do more in this area in order to prevent federal intervention.[57]

After Laney's speech, Mrs. F. R. Carlton of Dallas was nominated and voted Permanent Secretary. At that point the permanent committees, Resolutions, Credentials, and Steering, were assigned; then Strom Thurmond delivered the keynote address. He covered the same issues that Laney had just discussed, promising that at the conclusion of the campaign the Democratic party would not so eagerly sell the South out for minority votes.[58]

Alluding to economic issues, he explained how the South had long suffered from a discriminatory freight rate, "a 39% rate differential on manufactured goods as compared with the Eastern section of the country." Also high tariffs were frequently imposed on the South while the Eastern

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[57]Minutes, Jackson Mississippi Conference, May 10, 1948, Laney Papers, Southern Governors' Conference File. Hereinafter referred to as Minutes.

[58]"Speakers Handbook," pp. 25-36.

manufacturers enjoyed protection against price competition from the rest of the world. Emphasizing that the struggle was not one of race but one of principle, he, like Laney, concluded by defending segregation on the grounds that it was essential to the perpetuation of southern civilization. According to Thurmond he personally had no interest in any public office if he had to sacrifice principle for it. He stated that the rights of the people should not be "sacrificed on the block of blind party loyalty."[59] Then came Thurmond's challenge to the Democrats when he warned "the die is cast and the Rubicon crossed." He explained that the Democratic party had forced the hand of the South to take up the battle for the defense of democracy.[60] For all his histrionics, Thurmond received warm resounding applause.

Five resolutions were adopted and a Declaration of Principles based on the Declaration of Independence was read.[61] The resolutions consisted of a Declaration of Faith filled with states' rights and anti-Negro sentiments, the selection and instruction of delegates to the National Democratic Convention, and the rules for the Birmingham meeting if circumstances should require it. Another resolution requested that the chairman of this conference appoint a committee consisting of two Democrats from each of the states represented to hold organizational

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[59] Ibid. [60] Ibid. [61] Minutes.

meetings. In the third resolution the national southern leaders were commended for their stand against the civil rights program, while the fourth resolution thanked the governors and their co-workers of Mississippi and Arkansas for hosting and organizing the convention. After the endorsement of the fifth resolution, which commended Governor Wright's May 9, 1948, speech to his constituents, the conference closed with Mr. Gene Timmerman's singing of "Let's Send Harry Back to the Farm."[62]

After the meeting, Thurmond fielded questions from the press on the conference. Thurmond stated that the meeting was simply a phase in the action that the South would take to defend herself in the National Democratic Convention and in the electoral college. When asked about his choice for the southern candidates, he replied that there were many who were qualified, but he refused to name any of them. With respect to the South's willingness to compromise Thurmond explained in explicit terms that only a categorical removal of the civil rights program would permit such negotiations.[63]

Meanwhile the national Democratic party was systematically planning for the national convention. The executive committee of the Democratic party named Alben Barkley,

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[62] Ibid.

[63] "Questions submitted to J. Strom Thurmond by press regarding States Rights Democrats Convention in Jackson," May 10, 1948, Thurmond Papers, States Rights File.

Senate Leader, as temporary chairman and Sam Rayburn, House Leader, as permanent chairman. Rayburn in the position of permanent chairman could practically run the convention and, for the most part, recognize whom he pleased. At a press conference, McGrath, denying that this was a gesture aimed at appeasing the South, explained that appointments were based on past records of party loyalty and service.[64] Still there were hopes that Truman would renounce his civil rights program and agree publicly to the 1944 plank.[65] Some southern congressmen and administration aides were hard at work on a viable compromise in civil rights that would prevent the expected bolt, and, on June 8, it was reported that the administration would accept such a civil rights plank. Even so, most southern Democrats insisted on their continued opposition to Truman. Harry Byrd of Virginia expressed what many southerners thought: that it really did not matter how the platform read, everybody knew what Truman meant and wanted.[66]

Despite rumors of compromise, nothing of the sort was forthcoming. The Dixiecrats feverishly worked to create a political machine from nothing. On June 8, the SRD campaign committee met at Jackson to discuss the possibility of selecting their own candidates should Truman

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[64] New York Times, May 21, 1948.

[65] Ibid., June 8, 1948.

[66] Ibid., June 9, 1948.

be nominated at Philadelphia. Governor Ben Laney called the meeting to order and then enumerated such duties of the campaign committee as supporting presidential candidates who were for states' rights and opposed to civil rights, supporting electors and delegates from the various states who held similar views, holding a pre-convention caucus at which they would advise the national convention that they did not intend to support Harry Truman or anyone else of his political views, and preparing for the States' Rights meeting in Birmingham on July 17. This committee was directed to confine its efforts to the "former Confederate states" where it had the greatest chance of success.[67] The campaign committee was to begin working with the delegates and electors from those eleven states so they would be in agreement as to the party's aims and procedure. The committee should also be prepared to meet any and all developments that might arise at the Democratic convention.

The organization of the campaign was developed down to the state level allowing the states to form their own organization but providing liason men to work with the several states to give greater uniformity and direction to the overall campaign. The matter of determining how to get the SRD party on the ballot in different states was assigned to a "November Ballot Investigator." The Dixiecrats planned to establish a "nerve center" in Little Rock

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[67]Minutes.

from which to direct the campaign, a goal which was never fully realized. The coordination of fund raising and advertising, two indispensable factors, demanded a great amount of time from the committee. Since time was short, a daily schedule was drawn up detailing the work to be done between June 7 and election day. Radio talks were scheduled, southern dailies and weeklies were lined up to report on the party, States' Rights buttons were to be distributed as would be copies of the "States' Righter." The projected budget for two months was set at $90,000, and Jackson, Mississippi, was designated the temporary headquarters for the SRD.[68] At the close of the convention delegates were reminded not to let enthusiasm for the revolt diminish. Vigorous advertising and rousing publicity were stressed as essential to the success of the movement.[69]

With an agreement to galvanize and not lose the faith, one of the most important organizational conferences that the Dixiecrats would hold came to a close. Their success or failure would in large measure be determined by how well they were able to implement instructions received at the Jackson meeting. The Dixiecrats, with an impossible task before them, began the summer optimistically.

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

CHAPTER V

THE DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION

With much foreboding the Democrats anticipated the coming of the national nominating conventions in the summer of 1948. Nearly everyone believed that the Democrats, who would probably nominate Truman for the Presidency, faced inevitable defeat. The country seemed just as certain that Thomas E. Dewey, the Republican choice for the Presidency, would chalk up a victory. For many months the major national polling concerns, Roper and Gallup, argued not over the likelihood of the Democratic defeat, but over the extent of the defeat.

Truman had always labored under numerous handicaps. In appearance Truman's pedestrian, often rather crude mannerisms did not distinguish him in the eyes of his countrymen. Nor did the remarks that he frequently made to the press concerning the tremendous and almost overwhelming responsibility of the Presidency instill confidence in the public. When compared with the imposing figure of Franklin Roosevelt, he never quite seemed to measure up to the requirements of the position. His speeches, delivered with a

midwestern twang and sprinkled with homey aphorisms, lacked the refinement and sophistication of Roosevelt's.

Furthermore, the public failed to appreciate the almost insurmountable obstacles that Harry Truman faced. Many who had sympathized with Roosevelt and the wartime pressures thoughtlessly believed the conclusion of the Second World War would automatically solve American domestic problems. Actually, of course, the postwar period brought inflation, a shortage of goods, labor unrest, violent political conflicts between the Congress and the President and a renewed sense of pressing social issues.

Nor did friction in the international sphere abate with the war's end. The wartime coalition foundered on Soviet expansion and mutual suspicion. Unrest and revolt in the colonial empires of our European allies contributed to an uneasy peace and intruding in this already tense and unstable international atmosphere was the atomic bomb which portended ill for the fate of man. The leadership necessary to cope with such awesome developments seemed to many to be lacking in the United States.

One week after Japan surrendered, Truman sent to Congress his domestic program, which was an extension of the New Deal welfare reforms. In spite of the similarities between the programs, Truman failed to get the cooperation of many of the Republican New Dealers who accused Truman of conservatism. As the Republican aides began leaving

the Truman Administration, public confidence in the new President waned. Trouble within the administration over foreign policy matters caused further problems within the cabinet as well as within the party. In 1946, Henry Wallace's well-publicized speech, criticizing Secretary of State James Byrne's "get-tough-with-Russia" policy, ended in Wallace's resignation. And Wallace made good his threat to remind the administration continually of its misdirected foreign policy.

Meanwhile office-hungry Republicans were rejoicing over and attempting to capitalize on what seemed to be a disintegration of the New Deal coalition. The liberal-labor bloc became increasingly alarmed at Truman's handling of high prices and labor unrest. To cope with inflation Truman urged Congress to extend wartime price controls, but at the same time he denounced such controls to the press by calling them "police state methods." When Congress passed a watered down anti-inflation bill, Truman vetoed it. Yet as inflation grew more severe, Congress wrote another slightly stronger price control bill which Truman signed. In short, Truman's vacillation on inflation angered those who wanted high prices as well as those who wanted strict controls. Labor problems during this period were particularly acute and for Truman they posed added political problems. It appeared that Truman's request for the power to draft railroad workers into the

armed services would permanently alienate the labor vote from the Democratic party, but he later righted this affront to labor.

No President since Hoover had been so unpopular just prior to congressional elections. Republicans, taking full advantage of Truman's unpopularity with their slogan "Had Enough? Vote Republican" won a sweeping victory in 1946, their first victory since 1928. The GOP sent 246 of its party to the House as opposed to 188 Democrats. Fifty-one Republicans surfaced in the Senate while only forty-five Democrats returned. The Republicans also rejoiced over the twenty-five Governors they had elected. Some of the credit for the Republican victory must undoubtedly be attributed to the fissures in the Democratic party.

To rebuild the strength and prestige of the Democratic party was one of the enormous tasks facing Truman and his fellow party men in 1947 and 1948. Ironically, in view of the Wallace defection, Truman's foreign policy, as he dealt with Soviet Russia's aggression and with the countries of Eastern Europe through the Marshall Plan, helped advance the position of the party. In the domestic area, moreover, Truman began to pursue policies designed to appeal to labor and minority groups. This move was occasioned by the fact that the Democrats in 1946 lost their greatest number of votes in the cities. In his

request to Congress in May, 1947, for a public health program, he included a division calling for worker disability insurance. At the beginning of 1948 he urged an end to segregation and discrimination in the armed forces and in federal government jobs. By his immediate recognition of Israel as an independent nation in May, 1948, he hoped to enhance his appeal to a significant urban minority group.

Truman attracted farmers by his opposition to flexible price supports and support of subsidies. In June, 1941, he vetoed the anti-labor Taft-Hartley Act. Although overridden by Congress, Truman's veto won the affection of labor, an affection that was to have a towering influence in the 1948 election.

The old Democratic coalition, however, was actually being torn apart by a triangular struggle within the party. In 1947, when Henry Wallace officially declared himself an independent presidential candidate, he enunciated a program of domestic reform, "progressive capitalism," and an internationalist foreign policy. Wallace attracted Negroes, Communists, and some others from the far left in the Democratic party. Another left wing, but anti-Communist and anti-Wallace, element in the Democratic party was formed in 1947 by intellectuals, labor leaders, and urban leaders. This group, known as the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), worked steadily at a "Dump-Truman" movement. Then

there were the Dixiecrats who threatened to run their own candidates.

Faced with diverse dissension from within, the Democrats in one of their few concerted actions met in July in Philadelphia for their convention. When the Republicans met in this same city three weeks earlier the occasion was filled with optimistic crowds certain of victory. The Democrats did not convene with the same enthusiasm; room cancellations occurred during the week of the convention. There were attempts to cheer up the delegates by making signs such as "Keep America Human with Truman," and "Truman Victory Kits" for the delegates, complete with notebook, pencil, lighter fluid, and whistle. Some quipped that this was to be used in the Democratic graveyard.[1] One newspaper reported that the liveliest Democrat was the paper-mache donkey which had flashing electric eyes and a wagging tail.[2]

This contrast of convention moods was, unfortunately for the Democrats, not confined to the walls of the convention, for, televised for the first time in 1948, the national conventions were witnessed by thousands of select viewers. Pessimism pervaded the ranks of the Democratic delegates. They were positive that Harry Truman, the certain nominee, was incapable of winning the election. In a futile attempt to cheer up the delegates, the city of

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[1] "The Only Fight," Time, July 18, 1948, pp. 23-24.

[2] New York Times, July 13, 1948.

Philadelphia opened its bars on Sunday, but as the New York Times reported, "the delegates drank bourbon, scotch and rye as if it were so much embalming fluid--and with about the same effect."[3] As the Democratic delegates wandered aimlessly around the streets cab drivers complained at the lack of business. One quipped that they should have been driving hearses instead of cabs to match the mood of the representatives. Even delegates themselves spoke of "going to the wake."[4]

There were, however, some life-giving possibilities within the convention. Those who pushed the "Draft Ike" movement hoped for a struggle between Eisenhower and Truman for the nomination. Secondly, there was some uncertainty as to whom the vice-presidency would go, and then there was the pending southern walk-out.

A "Draft-Ike" movement in the talking stage as early as February of the year had been actively supported by the liberal ADA. Although the platform adopted by the ADA at their first annual convention in February, 1948, could have been taken from Truman's message to Congress, the ADA opposed Truman. Both Truman and the ADA supported the Marshall Plan, the National Health Insurance program, federal aid to education, and a civil rights policy. But Truman, the ADA exclaimed, as they pointed to the gap between what he said and what he did, was not liberal enough

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[3] Ibid., July 12, 1948. [4] Ibid.

for them. Primarily the ADA disliked Truman personally and sought to brand him as an incompetent political leader. Furthermore, these liberals were angered by Truman's appointment of conservative Democrats to posts vacated by New Dealers and many thought he had failed to support the Jewish cause in Palestine vigorously enough.

The main concern of the ADA was victory not principle. Looking for a charismatic leader to replace their revered Roosevelt, they turned to Eisenhower. Because of his extraordinary achievements abroad, they expected him to be every bit as spectacular on the home front. Richard Kirkendall, a leading historian of the Truman era, wrote that the ADA looked to Eisenhower to "stir the popular enthusiasm which would sweep progressive candidates across the country into Congress" and produce the type of leadership that would "defeat both the forces of vested reaction and the Communist-dominated third party."[5] Other explanations for the ADA support for Eisenhower, a conservative whose specific political views were unknown, are lacking.

Two weeks after the ADA convention, its members launched an attack against Truman, and by late March, James Roosevelt, an ADA vice-chairman, publicly expressed support

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[5]Richard Kirkendall, "The Presidential Election of 1948," in The American Scene, Varieties of American History, ed. by Robert D. Marcus and David Burner (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971), p. 403. Hereinafter referred to as Kirkendall, "The Presidential Election."

for General Eisenhower.[6] The ADA revolt against Truman originally consisted of a liberal-labor coalition. By April it picked up another element with ideologies completely foreign to those of the ADA. Dissident southern Democrats alienated from Truman by his civil rights program, the very core of the ADA movement itself, joined the ADA in support of Eisenhower. Why southern Democrats rallied to Eisenhower is no more logical than why the ADA supported him. Southerners knew as little of Eisenhower's principles as did the liberals but they seemed willing to trade anyone for Truman. Had such a movement gotten off the ground, its divergent groups no doubt would soon have split apart. But it was thought that if Eisenhower could join two such ideologically polarized groups as these, he could doubtless unite the country.[7]

The state convention of Georgia endorsed Eisenhower by means of a resolution on July 2, which in part read that Eisenhower was "the one man, the only proper man to lead the people of this nation in their fight against communism, tyranny and slavery" and he could "maintain the peoples of the world at peace."[8] The administration forces

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[6]Clifton Brock, Americans for Democratic Action: Its Role in National Politics (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1962), pp. 88-91.

[7]Ibid., p. 92; and New York Times, July 6, 1948.

[8]New York Times, July 3, 1948.

were fearful that the Eisenhower boom would hurt Truman at the convention. It was alleged that George Allen, former chairman of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, now an insurance executive, was sent to ask Eisenhower to remove his name officially from the race. When the press in early July reported this, the White House denied it, explaining that Allen had gone to visit Eisenhower for the weekend, but it was entirely on his own prerogative.[9]

Cabell Phillips, popular biographer of Truman, relates a somewhat different story. In the autumn of 1947, Truman, believing himself already defeated in the election, offered to give the Democratic nomination to Eisenhower, while Truman would relegate himself to the vice-presidential candidacy. Kenneth C. Royall, Secretary of the Army, supposedly first made the suggestion to Truman, who thought it was a fine idea. Truman then sent Royall to Eisenhower with the proposal, but Eisenhower refused it. Phillips checked the validity of the story with the men involved, and of the three involved, only Royall confirmed it. Eisenhower refused to comment on it and Truman denied it completely.[10] That Truman who fought so valiantly to maintain his position would resort to such action seems a little far-fetched.

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Cabell Phillips, The Truman Presidency: The History of a Triumphant Succession (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1966), pp. 196-97.

By the fourth of July, Alabama was stating her willingness to yield to any state that would nominate Eisenhower because he had so far only declined to take the Republican nomination. Texas, Arkansas, and South Carolina announced they would go for Eisenhower. Nineteen different party leaders under the leadership of James Roosevelt, California state chairman, sent telegrams to the 1,592 delegates to the Democratic Convention inviting them to a caucus in Philadelphia on July 10 to select the best man for the presidency. The root of this scheme was an effort to block Truman.[11] Sponsors of this strange coalition included Mayor William O'Dwyer of New York, Mayor Hubert H. Humphrey, Jr., of Minneapolis, James Roosevelt of California, Governor J. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, Governor Ben Laney of Arkansas, Senator Lister Hill of Alabama, and Governor William J. Tuck of Virginia.[12]

This curious collection of conservative southerners and liberal New Dealers worked feverishly for Eisenhower's nomination. Plans for the caucus at Philadelphia continued up to July 9, the day before the scheduled meeting, in spite of Eisenhower's July 5th announcement spurning the proposed draft.

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[11] New York Times, July 4, 1948; and Statement, Laney Papers, Letters Regarding Civil Rights File.

[12] New York Times, July 3, 1948.

Eisenhower had clearly stated his position: "I will not, at this time, identify myself with any political party and could not accept nomination for any public office or participate in partisan political contest."[13] He could hardly have issued a more forthright refusal, but his supporters refused to give up. James Roosevelt wanted the convention to go ahead and nominate Eisenhower because after the nomination the General surely would not refuse it. Active ADA supporters picketed Eisenhower's New York home with signs saying, "Ike, You Favor the Draft, We Favor it For You," and "Ike, You're A-I With Us, Be I-A in the Draft." All manner of means to persuade Eisenhower to accept the nomination were utilized.[14]

The Democratic leader of New York's borough of Queens, James A. Roe, declared his intention to introduce a resolution at the beginning session of the convention requesting that Truman step down in favor of Eisenhower. John M. Bailey, Democratic leader of Connecticut, thought that the convention should nominate Eisenhower without his consent and even run a campaign without his participation, if necessary. Bailey reasoned that Eisenhower had never stated his refusal to serve if elected President and he would not let his country down at such a time.[15]

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[13]Irwin Ross, The Loneliest Campaign: The Truman Victory of 1948 (New York: The New American Library, 1968), pp. 112-15. Hereinafter referred to as Ross, Loneliest Campaign.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid.

One of the most ludicrous incidents surrounding the efforts to nominate Eisenhower centered around the antics of Senator Claude Pepper of Florida, one of the most liberal of southerners in Congress. He suggested that the Democratic party become a "national" party and then draft Eisenhower as a "nonpartisan" candidate. Eisenhower would select his own vice-president, presumably Pepper, and even be allowed to write his own platform.[16] Pepper's efforts resulted in yet another telegram from Eisenhower of July 9, saying "no matter under what terms, conditions or premises a proposal might be couched, I would refuse to accept the nomination."[17] Pepper then relinquished his efforts and agreed to Eisenhower's plea not to place his name in nomination.[18]

At this point most ADA men decided to support Truman. A few however, among them Leon Henderson, chairman of ADA, tried to muster support for Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, a vigorous reformer and a liberal New Dealer. To get southerners to back Douglas, Henderson even promised to support restoration of the two-thirds rule. Southerners, though, knowing of Douglas' liberal pro-civil rights beliefs, refused to agree. Aware of Douglas' lack of northern support and slim

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[16] New York Times, July 7, 1948.

[17] Brock, Americans for a Democratic America, p. 94.

[18] Ibid.

chances of victory, the rest of the ADA members capitulated and unenthusiastically accepted the nomination of Truman on the first ballot.[19]

During early July, rumors spread that Truman might compromise on at least two of the issues that concerned the South and perhaps accept the 1944 plank along with a states' rights plank.[20] But southern leaders were unconvinced. Laney said he saw no chance to heal the break with the Truman supporters if they continued to place states' rights second to civil rights. Unless there were great concessions, no reconciliation would occur.[21]

The southern pre-convention caucus was called at Philadelphia on July 10, 1948, to outline a plan of action that the southern delegations would follow during the course of the National Democratic Convention. The delegations were instructed not to vote for Truman or anyone with similar beliefs, not to vote for any nominee who did not denounce civil rights, to keep the civil rights plank out of the platform, to insert a states' rights plank, and to try to defeat any proposal contrary to the SRD's beliefs. Finally, the caucus called for a post-convention meeting to be held in Birmingham if certain situations arose or if

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[19] Ibid., pp. 94-95.

[20] New York Times, July 3, 1948.

[21] Telegram, Ben Laney to Charles Scripps, July 8, 1948, Laney Papers, States' Rights Committee File.

specified conditions were not met at the Democratic convention. If the southern delegations were not seated, if Harry Truman should be nominated for the Presidency, or if the convention failed to adopt a states' rights plank, then the delegates were invited to meet on July 17, in Birmingham, to select an acceptable Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidate. It was the contention of those in control of the caucus that their action could be described neither as bolting the party, forming a new party, nor holding a rump convention. Instead, they maintained they were trying to return to the old Democratic party to the principles upon which it was founded.[22]

The day before the convention was to open a southerner with different views from the Dixiecrats, Senator Pepper, announced his desire to seek the Presidency of the United States. Promising to continue in the tradition of the New Deal, he pictured himself as a liberal practical southerner, but one who denounced Truman's civil rights program as being unenforceable and useless in the South. Claiming support from twenty-two states, he finally admitted that his only definite pledges, six-and-a-half votes, came from his home state of Florida. His brief campaign was made notable though when a twenty-two-year-old girl attempted to ride a horse onto the floor of convention hall. When stopped and questioned about her

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[22]Black Folder, Gibson Papers.

activities, she explained that she was campaigning for Pepper for President: "Everybody likes horses, everybody likes Pepper."[23] A policeman suggested that a donkey might have been more appropriate. The Pepper for President idea was abortive from the very beginning, and Pepper withdrew from the race shortly after the convention began.

As the convention opened Monday afternoon, July 12, unenthusiastic and restless delegates almost filled the floor. The routine chores of the convention such as greetings from the city fathers and speeches condemning the Eightieth Congress comprised the afternoon session. The first sign of any life in the convention occurred at the first night's session when Senator Alben Barkley delivered the keynote address. In his sixty-eight minute speech he praised the New Deal and the Democrats and denounced the Republican Congress. Except for his failure to predict victory in November, Barkley delivered the usual keynote address. But at the close of his address the convention finally came alive with a twenty-eight minute demonstration.[24] The somber proceedings began to sound like a convention. And perhaps it was this favorable reception of his speech that won for Barkley the vice-presidential nomination.

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[23] New York Times, July 18, 1948; New York Post, July 12, 1948; and New York Herald Tribune, July 12, 1948.

[24] New York Times, July 18, 1948.

Apparently the choice of a vice-president had received little attention prior to the convention. Although Leslie Biffle, the Secretary of the Senate and a friend of Barkley, had been promoting Barkley for the position, Truman's first choice was William O. Douglas. An associate of the Supreme Court and a well known liberal, Truman thought Douglas could cut into the Wallace appeal.[25] When Clifford, at Truman's request, contacted Douglas concerning the offer, the Justice was anything but enthusiastic. Douglas politely informed Clifford that he would consider the matter. The Friday prior to the opening of the convention, Truman, anticipating a favorable reply, telephoned Douglas who was vacationing in Oregon. Douglas again declined to answer but promised Truman he would make a decision by the opening day of the convention. He subsequently rejected the offer, explaining that he was not interested in becoming a politician.[26]

Douglas' final refusal then opened the way for Barkley, a poor choice politically speaking. He not only represented the older style politics of the New Deal, but also with his home of Kentucky neighboring Truman's home state of Missouri, he would not give any geographical balance to the ticket. Nevertheless, Barkley had much political experience as a long-time Democratic leader in

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[25] New York Times, July 12, 1948.

[26] Truman, Memoirs, II, 190.

the Senate, and as keynoter of the 1932 and 1936 conventions, he was a familiar figure. Perhaps Truman thought that Barkley could ease the friction between the northern and the southern factions of the party. The New York Times noted that he should be a good "caretaker of the possible minority party awaiting its chance to get back into the White House in 1952."[27] The details of how Barkley got the nomination are controversial. Truman's version stated that Barkley called him asking if the President cared if he tried to secure the nomination, to which Truman replied: "Why didn't you tell me you wanted to be Vice-President; it's all right with me."[28]

Barkley, however, related the conversation differently, alleging that Truman had asked him to run for Vice-President. Barkley claimed that when Truman called to congratulate him on his keynote address Truman asked Barkley why he did not tell him earlier that he wanted the vice-presidency. According to Barkley, Truman said, "I didn't know you wanted the nomination," to which Barkley responded, "Mr. President, you do not know it yet."[29] The New York Times reported that Barkley, upon hearing that Douglas had been the first choice for the vice-presidency retorted, "I'm not interested in any biscuits

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[27]New York Times, July 14, 1948.

[28]Truman, Memoirs, II, 190-91.

[29]Alben Barkley, That Reminds Me (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1954), p. 202.

that have been passed around to other people and then passed on to me cold."[30] Nonetheless, Barkley did accept the nomination. According to his memoirs, he accepted because he thought the convention favored him above all other possible candidates.[31] With the matter settled, Senator McGrath, on Tuesday, July 12, announced that the President had chosen Barkley as his running mate.[32] Delegates now directed their attention to the most explosive and crucial issue of the convention: civil rights.

By the second night of the convention, the confrontation that would split the convention wide open was taking shape. Three different proposals relating to civil rights were being projected. The left wing of the party represented by the ADA advocated the adoption of a strong civil rights platform with specific recommendations and well-defined measures for implementation. The Truman plank was simply a moderate and general statement of civil rights designed to appease the blacks and not to offend the South. Administration representatives would have been satisfied with the simple tokenism of the 1944 civil rights plank. The South on the other hand insisted that civil rights be totally excluded from the platform and in its place a strong statement of states' rights be drafted. This

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[30] New York Times, July 12, 1948.

[31] Barkley, That Reminds Me, p. 202.

[32] New York Times, July 13, 1948.

tri-lateral struggle over civil rights not only divided the delegates, but it was responsible for a defeat on the convention floor for the administration. At the conclusion of this battle, Truman inadvertently found himself saddled with a program which he opposed but which nonetheless helped bring him victory.[33]

The fight for a strong civil rights plank started several months prior to the convention. Hubert Humphrey and James Roosevelt sent letters to the party leaders in the different states asking their support in adopting a strong civil rights plank at the July convention.[34] Truman had hoped all along that these civil rights enthusiasts would lose some of their determination before the convention because he saw no need to widen the breach between the administration and the South. Various attempts or suggestions were made with Truman's approval in hopes of unifying the party.[35] For example, Francis J. Myers of Pennsylvania, a pro-civil rights Democrat and chairman of the platform committee, attempted to unify the party by supporting the 1944 civil rights plank.[36] Myers and Truman's staff, deciding on this compromise before the

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[33]Ross, Loneliest Campaign, p. 120.

[34]Brock, Americans for a Democratic America, p. 96.

[35]Ibid.

[36]"Plot and Counterplot," Newsweek, June 14, 1948, p. 25.

convention, ordered Clifford to write the draft for the platform ahead of time.[37] This moderate civil rights bill was presented at the initial platform committee meeting. The bill stated a belief in civil rights for all people regardless of racial or religious background, but it was filled with meaningless platitudes and provided for no specific measures or means of enforcement.

Thoroughly displeased with this weak platform Humphrey and former Congressman Andrew J. Biemiller of Wisconsin presented a much stronger civil rights plank which specifically called for personal safety from the crime of lynching and mob violence, equal opportunity in employment, full and free political participation and equal treatment in the armed forces.[38] A vigorous debate between the moderate liberal sponsors of civil rights legislation ensued with the ADA accusing the administration of giving in to the states' rights faction. One administration representative, Senator Scott Lucas, became so enraged at the ADA men and Humphrey in particular, that he repeatedly referred to Humphrey as a "pip squeak."[39]

Finally by Tuesday night the platform committee approved the mild civil rights plank while simultaneously

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[37]Ross, The Loneliest Campaign, p. 120.

[38]Brock, Americans for a Democratic America, p. 97.

[39]Winthrop Griffith, Humphrey: A Candid Biography (New York: Morrow Press, 1965), pp. 151-52.

rejecting the ADA plank. Humphrey then announced the intention of the ADA to take their contest to the convention floor in the form of a minority report. Officials scheduled the presentation of the platform for Wednesday afternoon.

While the liberal and moderate wings of the Democratic party tried to reach a compromise civil rights plank, southerners met to determine their course of action. Stubbornly insisting that the convention incorporate into the platform a strong statement affirming states' rights and rejecting civil rights, they refused to support the administration's mild plank on civil rights.[40]

Under Truman's direction, Senator Myers worked for days in hopes of drawing up a plank acceptable to the South. Myers finally agreed to a combination of the 1944 civil rights plank along with a strong states' rights plank supportive of the South's right to handle racial matters.[41] According to Charles Hamilton, a Mississippi delegate, administration leaders agreed to the inclusion of states' rights in the platform, if Mississippi would promise at that early point during the week not to bolt the convention. The Mississippi delegation refused, reaffirming their bolting pledge if Truman or a similar candidate were the convention's final choice. These delegates, according

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[40] Redding, Inside the Democratic Party, p. 192.

[41] "Plot and Counterplot," p. 25.

to Hamilton, were the ones responsible for the eventual defeat of the South's program in the convention. Many southern delegates resented their promise to bolt because their desertion would decrease the southern vote making it impossible for the South to get any concessions. Senator George of Georgia supported Hamilton's charge when after the convention he explained to the press that the "Mississippi bolters were responsible for the Southern failure in the convention."[42] When Mississippi declared its unbending intentions to bolt regardless, Pennsylvania, which held the deciding vote, cast its vote for the stronger civil rights plank.[43]

Seldom in complete agreement on any action, the southerners could not even agree on the presentation of a single minority plank concerning states' rights. They finally submitted three reports to the platform committee. Next they tackled the problem of selecting a protest candidate should Truman win the nomination. While the key men in the protest movement urged Ben Laney to be the candidate, the Texas delegation was talking both against the proposed bolt and against Laney's nomination. In a late night session Laney talked to the Texas delegation, reminding Governor Buford Jester of his strategic role in

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[42]Statement, "1948 Democratic Convention Scrapbook," Jacksonville, Florida, Charles Hamilton Papers.

[43]Ibid.

the movement and of his earlier commitments.[44] Jester made no reply to these overtures but his delegation finally promised to give at least token support to Governor Laney on the first ballot, but only if Laney remained in the Democratic party.[45] But when Laney discovered that other southerners including the delegates from Georgia did not support his nomination, he withdrew his name from the race. Dixon, upset by Laney's withdrawal pled with Laney not to leave the movement. Dixon feared that if Laney left it would "wreck the movement of which you are so valuable a part. People all over the South are looking to you for leadership," Dixon said.[46]

Laney's explanation for his behavior at Philadelphia was that there had not been a split with other Dixiecrat leaders nor had he changed his mind about opposing the civil rights program of Truman. He vowed himself to continue the fight against civil rights indefinitely. Laney said that there were differences of opinion on how to proceed with party organization and methods, but due to the gravity of the situation, they would all become united sooner or later. He explained that he had no major differences of opinion with any of the southern

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[44] Ben Laney, Private Interview, April, 1970.

[45] New York Times, July 13, 1948.

[46] Telegram, Frank Dixon to Ben Laney, July 15, 1948, Laney Papers, Governor Ben Laney File.

Governors.[47] After Laney withdrew his name from the candidacy, the South decided to use Richard Russell, the favorite son of Georgia, as a protest candidate.

Although the actual civil rights debate was not schedules until Wednesday, a related incident concerning the credentials committee--and perhaps influencing the voting of the next day on the issue--inflamed the tempers of the delegates. When the official Mississippi delegation was challenged by a second Mississippi delegation, called the Mississippi Loyalists led by Charles Hamilton, president of the Young Democrats of Mississippi, the credentials committee upheld the right of the regular Mississippi delegation to be seated. The Mississippi Loyalists along with other supporters challenged this decision on the grounds that the official delegation did not really represent Mississippi and they had already promised to refuse to support any candidate who was pro-civil rights. Upon hearing the credentials committee's decision, a black member of the committee, George L. Vaughn, delivered a minority report which opposed the decision and again called for the exclusion of the official Mississippi delegation. His comments evoked boos and ungentlemanly remarks from the southern delegations.

Barkley, the temporary chairman, called for a voice vote on Vaughn's minority report ignoring northern delegates

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[47] Ibid.

who wanted a roll call. Mysteriously, the floor microphones had been cut off giving Barkley a good excuse for not hearing their objections. Barkley declared that by virtue of the voice vote the report was defeated. A great deal of commotion occurred on the floor as some delegates stormed up to the platform demanding recognition, but in vain. The convention quickly adjourned for the night.[48]

This incident undoubtedly intensified the determination of civil rights supporters to secure adoption of a strong plank on the matter. The ADA met at a night-long caucus to plan their strategy for the civil rights battle, and they agreed that the Biemiller Amendment would be delivered by Hubert Humphrey. To make sure that Sam Rayburn, permanent chairman, did not repeat Barkley's mistake, Biemiller informed Rayburn of their desire for a roll call on the vote.[49] On Wednesday, four minority reports were presented to the convention: the Biemiller and three states' rights reports from Texas, Tennessee, and Mississippi. The last three amendments concerned with a states' rights plank said basically the same things. Dan Moody, former Governor of Texas, however, presented the major speech for the South. In it he requested that a short declaration of states' rights be included in the

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[48] New York Times, July 14 and 26, 1948.

[49] Ross, Loneliest Campaign, p. 124.

Democratic platform and reiterated the southern argument against the federal government's encroachment upon states' rights.[50] Moody's speech, moderate in tone, stated that his purpose was to restore harmony in the Democratic party and he explained that not only had he never bolted a convention before but that he had no plans of bolting the Democratic convention at that time.[51]

Speaking in behalf of the strong civil rights platform was Hubert Humphrey who was also running for a seat in the Senate. Having been warned against bucking the party, his decision to deliver such a speech was no small act of courage. He began by commending President Harry Truman for his stand on civil rights. Then he called upon Congress to guarantee to all people the right of full and equal political participation, the right to equal opportunity of employment, the right of security of person, and the right of equal treatment in the service and defense of our nation.[52] With a sincere belief in the principles of the report, Humphrey emphatically asserted his own ideas: "There are those who say to you--we are rushing this issue

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[50]C. Edgar Brown, comp. and ed., Democracy at Work Being the Official Report of the Democratic National Convention (Philadelphia: The Local Democratic Political Committee of Pennsylvania, n.d.), pp. 178-81. Hereinafter referred to as Official Report.

[51]Statement, Rushton Papers, Correspondence 1948 File.

[52]Ibid.

of civil rights. I say we are a hundred and seventy-two years late."[53] In conclusion he announced "The time has arrived for the Democratic party to get out of the shadow of states' rights and walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of human rights."[54] At the conclusion of his speech delegates, showing their approval, paraded enthusiastically for several minutes.

The debate over the civil rights programs was representative of the traditional division in American history between strict constructionism and loose constructionism.[55] Southerners threatened that "failure to reaffirm the constitutional rights of the states was essential to Southern confidence in and support of the party."[56] At the close of the debate the Texas amendment was voted down 925 to 309. Two other proposals by the South were rejected by voice vote, while the Biemiller amendment carried 651-1/2 to 582-1/2 amidst an uproar of boos and cheers.[57] In the midst of all this, Handy Ellis, chairman of the Alabama delegation, eager to make his dramatic announcement of Alabama's withdrawal from the convention,

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[53] New York Times, July 15, 1948; and Official Record, pp. 189-92.

[54] Ibid.

[55] New York Times, July 15, 1948.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Official Report, pp. 196-202.

tried unsuccessfully to gain recognition from chairman Sam Rayburn. Rayburn heard a voice vote on the adoption of the whole platform then quickly recessed the convention until the night session. Thus ended the historic civil rights debate in the Democratic convention of 1948.[58]

On Wednesday, July 14, the convention met to nominate its Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates. As soon as the night session began, Handy Ellis secured recognition and made his announcement. Alabama's electors were under instructions "never to cast their vote for Harry Truman, and never to cast their vote for any candidate with a civil rights program such as adopted by the convention. We bid you goodbye!"[59] As the thirteen members of his delegation walked out, they were joined by the entire Mississippi delegation of twenty-three men. Some southerners cheered; others sat dejectedly.[60]

As the dissenters left the convention hall, a delegate from Wisconsin piped out that it was a good riddance and that the Democrats could win the election without them. Ellis' comment was "The Hell you will. Harry Truman won't get $5.50 from the white people in Georgia to help his

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[58]Ross, Loneliest Campaign, pp. 125-26.

[59]"Democrats: The Live Squall," Time, June 26, 1948, p. 13.

[60]New York Times, July 15, 1948; and Commercial Appeal, July 15, 1948.

campaign."[61] The bolters walked out into a rainstorm, stopping briefly to pose for newspaper photographers.

But the southerners who remained withheld their votes from Truman. After order was restored, the proceedings continued. Alternate delegates filled in the places deserted by the bolters. When the roll call began with Alabama first, it yielded to Georgia who nominated Senator Russell for the Presidency, a nomination seconded by George Wallace, later Governor of Alabama.[62] The southern delegates demonstrated to the tune of "Dixie," after which Charles J. Block of Georgia, who nominated Senator Russell, warned the convention that "the South is no longer going to be the whipping boy of the Democratic party." Furthermore he maintained that the Democratic party could not win elections without southern support.[63]

The remaining southerners voted for Senator Richard Russell for the Presidency denying Truman the unanimous endorsement of the convention. When Truman was nominated, a demonstration, apparently the only thing well-organized at the whole convention, ensued lasting for thirty-nine minutes.[64] Truman won on the first ballot by 947-1/2 to 263 for Russell.

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[61] Gladys King Burns, "The Dixiecrat Revolt of 1948," (unpublished M.A. thesis, Auburn University, 1965), p. 165.

[62] Christian Science Monitor, July 15, 1948.

[63] New York Times, July 15, 1948.

[64] Ross, Loneliest Campaign, p. 128.

At 1:45 Truman and Barkley came out to make their acceptance speeches. Just prior to this, a committee-woman presented the President with a floral Liberty Bell which held a group of white pigeons as "doves of peace." Pigeons flew everywhere and some guests "suffered inadvertant damage to their clothes." But as pigeons landed on the rostrum, this nonsensical antic gave the convention some of the vitality that it had been lacking.[65]

In spite of the administration's opposition to it, the minority plank had won in the convention. Although McGrath, Myers, Rayburn, and Barkley, Truman's key men at the convention, as well as the states they represented, Rhode Island, Texas, Kentucky, and Missouri, voted against this minority plank, Truman did not miss the opportunity for getting credit for its passage. In his memoirs, omitting the story of the struggle over civil rights, he wrote that he was "perfectly willing to risk defeat in 1948 by sticking to the civil rights plank in my platform."[66]

At the conclusion of the convention, the South was outraged at the treatment it had received. Laney saw the South as having been "outnumbered and over-run" as had been the case many times before. The action at the 1948 convention, Laney said, constituted "the greatest insult

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[65] Ibid., p. 129.

[66] Truman, Memoirs, II, 182.

that was ever made against the South by the Democratic Party."[67] It was now beyond doubt that these outraged southerners would reconvene in Birmingham. From there they would demonstrate their protest to the nation.

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[67]Letter, Ben Laney to Jim Snoddy, June 20, 1948, Laney Papers, Governor Ben Laney File.

CHAPTER VI

THE BIRMINGHAM CONFERENCE

The long-feared southern revolt became a reality on Saturday, July 17, when the insurgents met in Birmingham, Alabama, for a rump convention. As he walked out of the convention at Philadelphia, Governor Wright had announced that the meeting at Birmingham was on. He said, "The chips are down. The Die has been cast. We must make Birmingham the beginning of our electoral college fight to save the South."[1]

The SRD argued that this was not a convention but rather another conference, a continuation of the May 10 Jackson meeting. There it had been decided that if Truman or someone else with similar views won the Democratic nomination, "true Democrats" would be forced to meet and select a more acceptable slate to run for the Presidency. In spite of the Jackson decision and statement of purpose, conflicting reports, issued at the time by the leaders and the press, clouded the purpose of the Birmingham meeting.[2]

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[1]Statement, Dixon Papers, States Rights Correspondence File.

[2]New York Times, July 17, 1948.

The lack of organization and the absence of recognized authority contributed to the confusion, the outstanding characteristic of the conference. Alabama and Mississippi Dixiecrats, Horace Wilkinson, Frank Dixon, Wallace W. Wright, and Sydney Smyer, appeared to be in charge of the convention although no one could be sure. Of those present at Birmingham some wanted to select candidates for the Presidency and Vice-Presidency while others preferred a campaign to free the presidential electors from their pledges to vote for the Democratic ticket.

In addition to the arguments over purpose and procedure there was disagreement over the terminology to be used at the Birmingham meeting. As already mentioned, there was disagreement over the type of meeting. Was it a conference or was it a convention? Who were the official delegates to this convention, if, of course, it were a convention? Laney himself, in his call for the meeting emphasized there were no official delegates; all were volunteer interested citizens who professed a belief in states' rights while opposing civil rights.[3]

These volunteer citizens were responding to Laney's call for a conference: "This is a 'grass roots' meeting and I urge every man and woman who believes in States' Rights and who opposes Harry S. Truman and the things he openly stands for to attend." The selection of Truman and

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[3]Statement, Laney Papers, Unfiled.

the inclusion of a civil rights program, Laney explained, have dictated the need for States' Righters to take "militant and positive action if they are to protect those principles that should be dearer to true Americans than life itself."[4]

Just before the opening of the conference, scheduled to begin at 10:00 A.M. in the Municipal Auditorium, Wallace supporters paraded across the front of the auditorium with picket signs reading "Win with Wallace" and "Down with Lynching." But incessant booing and heckling caused the Wallace picketers to leave about fifteen minutes after arriving.[5]

The convention itself began thirty minutes late in a hall decorated with red, white, and blue bunting. Delegate seating was marked by the various state flags and standards. State banners represented were Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Texas, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, and Arkansas. Four students from the University of Virginia and one lady composed the Virginia delegates. None were identified as belonging to Kentucky or North Carolina, while Louisiana, Florida, and Texas each had approximately fifteen to twenty-five representatives.[6] South Carolina

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[4] Ibid.

[5] St. Louis Post Dispatch, July 17, 1948.

[6] New York Times, July 18, 1948.

was well represented by people from the Governor's office. Representing Tennessee were ten university students and five interested citizens. Georgia counted eight, and Arkansas twelve.[7] There were twenty people not from the southern states: Indiana (one), Pennsylvania (five), Illinois (two), California (two), Maryland (four), Washington, D.C. (one), Colorado (one), and Oklahoma (four).[8]

"Alfalfa Bill" Murray, former Governor of Oklahoma, at seventy-nine was one of the oldest "delegates" present. Though nearly blind and half deaf, he was a loyal supporter. After his two-day bus trip, during which he lost his baggage, he appeared listless and wrinkled "with a piece of gauze around his neck." Under his arm he carried copies of his book The Place of the Negro proudly boasting that he was "the man who introduced Jim Crow in Oklahoma."[9] Other extremists such as Gerald L. K. Smith, a noted racist who went by the pseudonym of S. Goodyear, were also present but had no active role in the conference itself.[10]

Considering the heavy southern composition, at the outset of the meeting, the display of Confederate flags and pictures of Confederate leaders was discouraged to

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Birmingham Age Herald, July 18, 1948; and Montgomery Advertiser, July 19, 1948.

[9] Birmingham News, July 17, 1948.

[10] "Tumult in 'Dixie,'" Time, July 26, 1948, pp. 15-16.

avoid giving any more of a sectional tone to the conference. But as the conference got under way large portraits of Robert E. Lee bobbed up and down from time to time, while delegates insisted on waving Confederate flags and singing "Dixie." The hall with a capacity of six thousand people was packed and the aisles bulged with people. Since all present could not get into the hall, loudspeakers conveyed the proceedings to the "responsive, excited, sometimes hysterical" crowd of several hundred outside.

One description of the convention depicted it as having "all the pent-up fever of a giant, boisterous revival meeting."[11] The Birmingham News reported the Tutwiler lobby filled with "scowling, cigar-waving men," many in white or seersucker suits looking "like a Yankee thinks Southerners ought to look."[12] Numerous college students including over fifty black-hatted University of Mississippi students were present. Their continual chanting of "to hell with Truman" won for them the dubious distinction of being the noisiest of the demonstrators.[13]

Not all of the "delegates" were so optimistic and enthusiastic. Some appeared to be bored, amused or even fatalistic. The enthusiastic supporters, however, dominated and as the day wore on, they became progressively more boisterous. In fact, they became so rowdy that ABC

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[11] Birmingham News, July 17, 1948.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., July 18, 1948.

stopped coverage of the affair in mid-afternoon, saying that the meeting was "too inflammatory."[14] It was a "slam bang affair" that "gained momentum as it moved toward its close late in the afternoon."[15]

At one point the crowd verged on mob hysteria when a man, unknown at that time to the general audience, dared protest the proceedings. Cries of "throw that Communist out" were heard throughout the auditorium before it was discovered that the objector was retired Army officer and aspirant for the Presidency, Herbert C. Holdridge. A police escort quickly provided for his safe exit from the meeting.[16] As the band struck up "Deep in the Heart of Texas," "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny," and "Dixie," the crowd quickly forgot the Holdridge incident.[17]

Few big name politicians were seen at the Dixie gathering--"the meeting had more lung power than political strength."[18] The governors from Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, and Virginia were in Birmingham, but the only active ones were Thurmond and Wright. Other political figures of some significance were Frank Dixon of Alabama; Hugh White, former Governor of Mississippi; Sam Jones, former Governor of Louisiana; Senator Eastland

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[14] Montgomery Advertiser, July 20, 1948.

[15] Birmingham News, July 18, 1948.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Montgomery Advertiser, July 29, 1948.

and Senator John Stennis of Mississippi; Handy Ellis, Alabama chairman of national convention delegates; Representatives John Bell Williams and William Colmer of Mississippi.[19] As one writer said, there was an "utter lack of any aristocracy of Democracy amongst the new Dixocracy."[20] Noticeable by their absence were such important southern leaders as Lister Hill and John Sparkman of Alabama, Ben Laney, Senator Russell of Georgia, Senator Byrd of Virginia, Governor Talmadge of Georgia, and Governor Earl Long of Louisiana.[21]

Gessner T. McCorvey called the meeting to order. Following the invocation by the pastor of Southside Baptist Church in Birmingham who asked God to "purge from [their] hearts, all prejudice," Ruby Mercer of the Metropolitan Opera sang the "Star-Spangled Banner" and "Dixie."[22] Walter Sillers, speaker of the Mississippi House of Representatives, was elected permanent chairman, and after several preliminary speeches, former Governor of Alabama, Frank M. Dixon, delivered the keynote address. It was similar to all the other statements made concerning the reasons for the southern bolt. Many Dixiecrat supporters were especially moved by his words when he explained that

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[19] New York Times, July 19, 1948.

[20] Montgomery Examiner, July 19, 1948.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Birmingham News, July 17, 1948.

Truman's civil rights program of integration "means to reduce us to the status of a mongrel, inferior race," and to make a mockery of the Anglo-Saxon heritage.[23] Heavy applause and cheers often interrupted Dixon. When he warned that "the South will fight the attempt to mongrelize our people," the entire auditorium vibrated with wild ovations of approval. And his allusions to the absence of high southern officials brought shouts of "where is Lister Hill" and "drive the quislings out."[24]

The mammoth Alabama-led demonstration following his speech was joined by others waving their state and Confederate flags and chanting "To Hell with the Yankees."[25] Shouts of "We want Dixon" and "To Hell with Truman" were heard amidst an uproar which lasted for twenty minutes despite the absence of any music from the band which had been dismissed during Dixon's speech. While the crowd in the gallaries cheered tirelessly, the floor, as one reporter described it, was "a surging sea of frenzy." Confederate flags waved wildly as a college student paraded down the aisles carrying aloft a huge portrait of Robert E. Lee.[26] And all Dixon, described by the Montgomery Examiner

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[23]"Speakers Handbook," pp. 43-44.

[24]Washington Post, July 18, 1948.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Birmingham Post, July 17, 1948; and "The South: War Between the Democrats," Newsweek, July 26, 1948, pp. 21-22. Hereinafter referred to as "War Between the Democrats."

as the "silver-tongued orator with his a-la-Bryan keynote speech," need do to stir the crowd was just to mention "Truman, Damn-Yankee, Dixie or sandwich and Coca Colas."[27]

By the afternoon session, the crowd had swelled to seventy-five hundred. The session began at 2:30 with a brief speech by Governor Jim Folsom of Alabama setting the tone for the session by denouncing Truman's disregard for states' rights. The report of the Resolutions Committee presented next by Horace Wilkinson proposed that they "rededicate" themselves to the principles and traditions of the Democratic Party" and "repudiate the blasphemy of those who would charge us with bolting."[28] The resolutions included one releasing all delegates from any supposed obligation to the proceedings of the Philadelphia convention. Each state in a very significant but ill-defined resolution was beseeched to cast its electoral votes for Thurmond for President and Wright as Vice-President. The audience did not realize that this resolution was a nomination until Wilkinson explained that "This is considered a nomination for President and Vice-President."[29]

Then with the mention of Thurmond and Wright as nominees of the SRD's the crowd became hysterical.

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[27] Washington Post, July 18, 1948.

[28] Letter, Horace Wilkinson to Editor of Atlanta Constitution, July 26, 1948, Black Folder, Gibson Papers.

[29] Ibid.

Demonstrations broke out immediately. According to the Birmingham News if the candidates appeared to be "a little less than enthusiastic, it did not dim the crowd's ardor."[30] A seventy-seven year old Georgia delegate, Mrs. Beulah Waller, known as the "Wool Hat Woman of Georgia," did a jig on the stage during the demonstration that followed the nominations. She proclaimed that she would "walk all night for Southern Democracy."[31] The demonstration was of such intensity that Chairman Sillers was able to restore order only by having the band play the "Star-Spangled Banner." Then Senators Eastland and Palmer Bradley, Dixiecrat leader from Texas, seconded the nominations.[32]

Governor Wright spoke first in praise of the history of the southern Democrats. He urged that people not consider the conference a bolt from the Democrats. "I say to you that we are the true Democrats of the Southland and these United States."[33] His introduction of Thurmond proclaimed that "our people are going to vote for J. Strom Thurmond, a man of integrity--a man in whom you'll be proud to place your trust."[34]

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[30]Birmingham News, July 18, 1948.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Dolores Ann Hobbes, "The States Rights Movement of 1948" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Samford University, 1968), p. 51.

[33]"War Between the Democrats," pp. 21-22.

[34]Ibid.

Thurmond's speech was a condemnation of Truman's programs. Thurmond argued, "For our loyalty to the party we have been stabbed in the back by a President who has betrayed every principle of the Democratic party in his desire to win at any cost."[35]

So it was that Thurmond and Wright finally represented the Dixiecrat ticket, though apparently the choice of candidates had been uncertain up to the last minute. Reports claimed that Laney was the first choice, but when he refused the honor, a committee of three was given the duty of selecting the candidates. By a majority decision of this committee they agreed upon Wright for President and Thurmond for Vice-President. Thurmond, however, refused to go along with this agreement saying that he would run only if he were given first place on the ticket.[36]

The biographer of Thurmond presents a different version of the story. She claims that Thurmond, unenthusiastic about Birmingham, had not even planned to attend the meeting. He was scheduled for a visit with a South Carolina National Unit at Camp Stewart, Georgia, on the same day. But when notified that it was urgent for him to be at the Birmingham meeting, he arranged to attend. Upon entering the hall at the conference in the afternoon,

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[35] New York Times, July 18, 1948.

[36] Ben Laney, Private Interview, Magnolia, Arkansas, April, 1970.

he was offered the SRD nomination for President of the United States.[37]

The conflicting accounts concerning the SRD's choice for President make it difficult to know what actually happened. Judging from newspaper articles, the Thurmond story seems to be the least likely one. Prior to the Birmingham conference, numerous stories were circulated to the effect that Laney would be the man favored for President by the majority of the States' Righters. The only other name that was suggested as a possibility for the Presidency was Fielding Wright of Mississippi. According to these press stories, Thurmond would be the second man on the ticket.

The information provided on the committee of three, whose purpose was to select a Presidential candidate, is not extensive. According to Merritt Gibson, the national campaign chairman, the committee did actually exist but he was unable to remember the names of those serving on it or the exact time that it met.[38] There is no evidence which casts doubt upon the existence of such a committee. If Thurmond knew the choice of the committee ahead of time, that may well have been his reason for not planning

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[37]Alberta Morel Lachicotte, Rebel Senator: Strom Thurmond of South Carolina (New York: Devin-Adair Company, 1966), pp. 42-43.

[38]Merritt Gibson, Private Interview, Longview, Texas, April, 1970.

to go to Birmingham. However, there is no concrete evidence to support this observation.

Laney's refusal to run for President on the SRD ticket caused concern to many in the SRD ranks. This led to further speculation that the Dixiecrat leaders were at odds. When Laney remained in his hotel room in Birmingham during the entire meeting, many feared he was abandoning the movement. And at the conclusion of the meeting, Laney issued a statement that confirmed his differences with the leaders. Laney appeared to be chiding the other Dixiecrat leaders contending that "the spirit of obstinacy and revenge is not the spirit of the Southland."[39] But he reaffirmed his belief in opposition to civil rights by saying the spirit of the South may have been damaged but not broken. Emphasizing that the immediate objective of the SRD should be to defeat the proposed civil rights measures he added that it should "be done through and by the official Democratic organization in each state."[40]

Laney served as the permanent chairman at the states' rights campaign committee meeting in Jackson in May and also presided at the pre-convention caucus in Philadelphia. But he feared that there was not enough time, money, or organizational know-how to give any hope of

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[39]Laney Interview.

[40]Montgomery Advertiser, July 19, 1948.

success to a third party.[41] In explaining his action at Birmingham, Laney stated that he withdrew his name at Birmingham for the same reason that he withdrew it at Philadelphia: he feared that the South would not support him solidly. He proposed that more popular candidates be selected since they would have a greater chance for success. Laney claimed that he had never changed his mind about opposing civil rights and Truman, but he favored fighting within the party rather than from the outside.[42]

On several other occasions, Laney reiterated his fear that his leadership might serve as a divisive force in the southern ranks. He explained furthermore that since the people from Arkansas had not agreed on a course of action he actually had no authority to commit his state to the cause.[43] It has been suggested by critics that Laney refused the nomination because he was an oil man, and his name on the ticket would lend credence to the charge that big business was backing the revolt.[44] Regardless of the reasons for his vacillating stand, he

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[41]Ben Laney, Private Interview, Magnolia, Arkansas, April, 1970.

[42]Letter, Ben Laney to Ruth Byrne, July 20, 1948, and Ben Laney to George Armstrong, July 29, 1948, Laney Papers, Letters Regarding Civil Rights File.

[43]Letter, Ben Laney to T. C. King, July 23, 1948, Laney Papers, Letters Regarding Civil Rights File.

[44]Raleigh-News-Observer, August 2, 1948.

held a key position in the movement throughout its duration. Governor Laney disapproved of the radicals in his group and longed for a more sophisticated movement. Although he periodically became disgusted with the movement itself, he never altered his sincere belief in states' rights.

Following the acceptance speeches of the Dixiecrat leaders the statement of principles was adopted with no dissenting votes. The Birmingham Principles affirmed the belief in racial and religious minority rights but said that the protection of the "Constitutional rights of a minority does not justify or require the destruction of Constitutional rights of the majority."[45] The statement confirmed the South's belief in guarding "the American people against the onward march of totalitarian government" and the "faithful observance of Article X of the American Bill of Rights."[46] The statement alluded to the tidelands issue as an example of the threat to our form of government. As for the Democratic convention the Birmingham statement noted that it was "rigged to embarrass and humiliate the South." It continued by declaring that segregation and the special reorganization of the civil rights section of the Department of Justice was an anathema to the South.

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[45] Newsletter, Black Folder, Gibson Papers.

[46] Ibid.

Loudly proclaiming its loyalty, the South indicated that if a foreign power attempted to force a program upon the entire nation in the same way in which the civil rights program was being forced upon the South, war would be inevitable. The Dixiecrats outlined their beliefs as reverence for the Constitution as the greatest charter of human liberty ever devised; opposition to efforts to destroy the rights of all citizens; support of social and economic justice; opposition to a totalitarian, centralized government and a police state; support of segregation; opposition to the enforcement of the Truman program that would "destroy the Southern ~~way~~ of life"; support of the checks and balances system of government run by the people.[47]

Following such a statement of beliefs they presented their states' rights platform. It argued, first of all, that the chief problem in the United States was the preservation of Constitutional government and that to preserve this it would be necessary to eliminate Communists from governmental jobs and from all positions that would have access to important information. The second major argument within the platform was that the states, and not the federal government, should have power over matters such as voting, the poll tax, segregation, the enforcement of laws, and employment practices.

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[47] Ibid.

After the presentation of the platform the Dixiecrats then voted to put forth their own slate of electors and they appointed a general chairman of the SRD campaign committee, who was to appoint a finance committee and chairman. In order to give the organization a name and to analyze methods by which the party could get on the ballot, the Dixiecrat leaders decided to meet in Atlanta, July 24, and every state was encouraged to send representatives to the next meeting in Birmingham to be on October 1. After all of the resolutions had been adopted unanimously and the meeting was ending, Wilkinson yelled, "Harry Truman won't be able to carry Independence, Missouri."[48]

At a press conference following the conference Thurmond told the reporters, "I came over here to say a few words and found myself recommended for President."[49] When questioned about the issue of white supremacy, he said he was "not interested one whit in the question of 'white supremacy'" and added that he was anxious that "the rest of the country realize we have some pretty good guys down here."[50]

But there had been white supremacy speakers at Birmingham. Eastland, Dixon, and Alfalfa Bill Murray were among them.[51] Strom Thurmond on the other hand scolded

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[48] Washington Post, July 18, 1948.

[49] New York Times, July 19, 1948.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

the white supremacy people, saying that he himself was, "a progressive Southerner" interested in improving the lot of the Negro, but he would "campaign on the states' rights" ticket solely in support of his beliefs in "the sovereignty of the states as against Federal Government interference."[52] His actions, however, were not always consistent with his rhetoric and Thurmond repeatedly exploited the racial issue under the guise of states' rights. Another of the Dixiecrat leaders, Ben Laney, also objected to speakers who used race appeal as a calling card for the movement. To Laney, Birmingham was a flagrant display of uncontrolled racism. He repeatedly urged the party to be more moderate and orthodox in its practices.[53]

Reaction, on the whole, to the Birmingham conference was unfavorable. Most of the leading newspapers denounced the movement. Even in the South, few influential papers supported the Dixiecrats. For example, the Montgomery Advertiser decried the fact that the Birmingham convention had re-enforced to the North and to the world the stereotype image of the bigoted southerner. The South needed the support of the rest of the nation but was not likely to get it "by shouting 'nigger.' We cannot win friends by hoarse blasphemies and the appearance of unreasoning

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Letter, Wallace Malone to Ben Laney, August 3, 1948, Laney Papers, States Rights Committee File.

obstinacy."[54] The editorial observed that Dixon's address sounded as if it was tailored for a Ku Klux Klan rally. "It was racism and sectionalism at its worst and will certainly do more harm than good to the cause he purported to represent."[55]

The editor of the Anniston Star, Colonel Harry M. Ayers, wrote disapprovingly of the Birmingham convention saying that "their get together was more like a Roman holiday than a convention."[56] While it did not represent all of the South, it did give the militants an opportunity "to blow off steam and afforded the college boys and girls an opportunity to get out of summer school and join in the high jinks that characterized the parade."[57] Ayers concluded that he saw "no good excuse whatsoever for the Birmingham rump convention. Its principal effect will be o elect the Dewey-Warren Republican ticket. . . ."[58]

With the Birmingham festivities behind them the first days of August were busy ones for the Dixiecrats. They were hard at work in an effort to get their candidates on the ballots in the various states as well as making plans for their formal convention scheduled for August 11 in Houston, Texas. Although more subdued than Birmingham, the Houston convention was merely a re-enactment

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[54] Montgomery Advertiser, July 20, 1948.

[55] Raleigh-News-Observer, August 2, 1948.

[56] Ibid. [57] Ibid. [58] Ibid.

of Birmingham.[59] Houston was the chosen cite because the Dixiecrat leaders knew it was necessary to make a double effort to swing Texas and its twenty-three electoral votes into their column. It was hoped that this official opening of the SRD campaign would give the SRD additional and desperately needed publicity.

Heading the Dixiecrat movement in Texas was wealthy Texas oil man E. E. Townes, former chief counsel for Humble Oil and chairman of the state steering committee. Oil attorney and former governor, Dan Moody, Jr., organized Young Dixiecrat Clubs while Houston oil millionaire, Hugh Roy Cullen, hosted at the reception for Thurmond after the convention.[60]

At the Same Houston Coliseum on August 11, in Houston, a milling, sometimes boisterous, crowd of 10,000 assembled. Their object, as reported by Pat Flaraty of the NBC affiliate KPRC Houston, was to win the 127 electoral votes from the eleven southern states. As the convention was about to open, four pickets from the Harris County Progressive party were virtually ignored as they marched in front of a crowd.

Frank Dixon, former governor of Alabama, introduced Fielding Wright, the SRD choice for Vice-President. As

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[59]Merritt Gibson, Private Interview, Longview, Texas, April, 1970; and "Third Parties: The Only Hope," Time, August 23, 1948, pp. 16-17.

[60]G. T. McCorvey, "High Cotton," New Republic, CXIX (August 30, 1948), 10.

the band played "Dixie," the crowd came to its feet making rebel yells and honoring Wright with a standing ovation.[61]

The focus of Wright's speech was on individual rights which would be made secure only by the acceptance of states' rights. He said that government should allow the states to protect the right of choosing one's own employment, one's own church, and one's own fellow workers. The government, he stressed, should protect the right of a community to govern itself. He not only warned that these rights would be lost in a Truman victory, but also that a dictatorship might possibly emerge from the enactment of the Truman program.

His comments on the loyalty of the South to the Democratic party drew loud applause and cheers from the audience as did his condemnation of the big city. Throughout his speech he alluded to the unfair treatment the South had received at the hands of the Democrats, especially at Philadelphia. The Democrats, he cried, had deserted their traditional patterns and had gone to following the bosses and the liberal elements in the Democratic party. In closing he accused the present Democratic and Republican parties of being "philosophically bankrupt. They are mere vehicles for getting into and holding onto office."[62] As

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[61]Tape of Houston Convention, Located with Gibson Papers. Hereinafter referred to as Tape.

[62]Ibid.

Wright saw it "Only a return to American principles, to local self-government, can halt the unseemly spectacle we are now witnessing."[63] For his speech Wright received a standing ovation.

Next Dixon introduced Strom Thurmond as the man from Edgefield, South Carolina, the home of William B. Travis and James Bonham, both heroes of the Alamo. The crowd broke out once again into loud cheers while the band played "The Eyes of Texas" and "Dixie." In his speech he made reference to "a blue-print prepared by the nominee of the communistic Progressive Party for lifting the face of America and giving us the "new Russian look."[64] Thurmond stressed that if the country loses states' rights, "then may we ask: 'For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?'"[65]

Thurmond compared dictatorships in Italy and Germany during the Second World War period to what Truman was then establishing in Washington. Attacking the anti-lynching proposal, he said, "the Red, the Pinks and the subversives are making use of the horror which American people hold for this form of murder to try to change our system of government."[66] He stated that the FEPC "was patterned after a Russian law written by Joseph Stalin about 1920,

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

referred to in Russia as Stalin's 'All-Races Law.'" The FEPC, he claimed, being used by the Communist infiltrators into our government, should be entitled "a law to sabotage America." Thurmond told the crowd that in order to enforce the FEPC a federal Gestapo would be created just as the one formerly existent in Germany and Italy. In conclusion he stated his acceptance of the challenge to lead a great cause of saving the United States republic and the American way of life.[67]

The crowd was immediately on its feet cheering Thurmond. The NBC commentator noted various signs that were being carried on the floor but said that one in particular had been an eye catcher for the crowd. It read that the South was proud of Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina and that "Texas is in this fight with you until the end. We were not yellow in 1861 and we are not yellow now. Excuse our Governor."[68] The sign was being carried by four teenagers who were sponsored by a man who dubbed himself an unreconstructed rebel who had only ten dollars, the cost of the sign. The only high Texas official present at this convocation was Houston's Mayor Oscar Holcomb. There were no state or national senators or congressmen from Texas in attendance.[69]

As the demonstration progressed, Ray Miller, newsman on the scene, interviewed Merritt Gibson down on the

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[67] Ibid. [68] Ibid. [69] Ibid.

convention floor. He asked Gibson if it would be legal for Democratic electors to be pledged to candidates other than those selected by the Democratic national convention. Gibson replied that the Supreme Court of Alabama had ruled that electors were not bound by any law. He explained that if electors were free agents in Alabama then they would be anywhere since the principle was the same.[70]

With the conclusion of the Birmingham convention it was clear that the Dixiecrats had grown from a few irate southern leaders into a mass movement. Despite numerous obstacles such as shortage of time, lack of money, and poor organization, the newly formed party prepared now to launch a full-fledged campaign.

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[70] Ibid.

CHAPTER VII

PARTIES AND CAMPAIGNS

The Presidential election of 1948 was unique in that practically no one forecast the upset victory of the Democratic party. With the party split into three factions, the chances of a Democratic victory seemed nil. When pollsters and politicians alike predicted defeat for the Truman Administration, only Truman himself, as the traditional interpretation goes, believed victory possible.

Kirkendall disputes this view and maintains that the victory was not personal but rather a party victory and that Truman did not singlehandedly achieve victory. Calling the idea of the "lonely campaign" a romantic myth, Kirkendall points out that Truman's success was due to the tireless efforts of his advisers and the whole party.[1]

Nor can the picture of the Democratic campaign in 1948, as a hastily improvised effort be substantiated. Hours of tedious planning, heated discussions and arguments by Truman's advisers continued relentlessly from 1946 to 1948. Every action and move was carefully

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[1]Kirkendall, "The Presidential Election," pp. 400-1.

calculated as to its effect on the electorate. The man most responsible for the basic strategy of the Truman campaign was Clark Clifford, a lawyer from St. Louis, Missouri. Within the Truman Cabinet as within the Democratic party, ideological differences led to the formation of the conservative wing led by John W. Snyder, Secretary of the Treasury, while Clifford headed the opposing liberal faction. Truman was influenced first by one faction then by the other. But by the middle of 1947 Clifford was Truman's most trusted adviser.[2]

The blueprint for the Truman campaign was contained in a lengthy memorandum on "The politics of 1948" written by Clifford and given to Truman in November, 1947. As early as the summer of 1947, Clifford started gathering information on what Truman should do in order to be prepared for the election of 1948. Although there was no hint of a southern revolt, Wallace already was giving lectures around the country denouncing the Truman program. To some of the labor groups Wallace hinted on several different occasions that he might run for the Presidency. Clifford took note of this left wing disaffection in writing his analysis of present conditions and future political trends in the nation. He predicted that Thomas E. Dewey would be the Republican candidate, that Henry Wallace would run on a third party ticket and that even if Truman lost

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[2]Ross, Loneliest Campaign, p. 21.

the East, he could still win the election with the support of the South, the West and labor. Although most of the memo was surprisingly accurate, Clifford did make one gross error: he saw the South as being so solidly Democratic that it could be ignored in the making of national policy.

The memo contained a prophetic breakdown of important special interest groups such as the farmers, laborers, Negroes, and Catholics. The farmer, Clifford wrote, was pro-administration at the present and as long as he made good crops and was protected by parity he should vote Democratic. Beyond what the administration had already done for the farmer there was little else to do except to pay special attention to him in campaign speeches and in this Truman excelled.

Clifford saw the labor vote as instrumental to Truman's success. He feared that if no major party was pro-labor, laborers could refuse to vote at all or would vote for Wallace. Clifford advised Truman to court the labor vote whenever possible and he also emphasized the necessity of Truman's winning other liberal groups in addition to labor.

The Negro vote was also of great importance and might hold the balance of power in New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michigan. Clifford feared that Republicans would make a play for the black vote by

supporting anti-poll tax and FEPC laws. So in order to win this vote the Democrats needed a clever maneuver that would undercut the Republicans and the Progressives. Thus, Truman delivered his civil rights message.

The Catholic vote, Clifford reasoned, governed by their fear of Communism, could therefore be kept in hand by Truman's foreign policy toward Communist countries. Even the deterioration of United States-Russian relations would not be detrimental but rather would broaden Truman's appeal to all types of voters. If the Republicans tried to play up Communist infiltration in government, the Democrats could point to the federal employee loyalty measures already established to combat this menace.

Clifford deemed inflation and the housing shortages as issues that the average citizen would be most sensitive to. He suggested that Truman request a maximum anti-inflation program, public housing plan, and tax revisions to help the lower income groups. Knowing that the Republican Congress would reject these proposals, Clifford concluded that it would then make it impossible for the Republicans to run on a similar platform. Truman did not really have to worry so much about the implementation of these proposals, Clifford assured him, they would merely serve as political pawns. But he emphasized that in order for this strategy to work there must be no compromises.

This strategy would hurt not only the Republicans but Wallace as well. To make a direct attack on Wallace,

Clifford urged that at a strategic moment, liberals should denounce the Communism inherent in the Wallace program. Truman would have to move further to the left with economic and civil rights reforms if he hoped to steal Wallace's platform. He suggested further that Truman should appoint prominent progressives whenever possible; whether or not the Senate confirmed them was immaterial.

Another section of the memorandum urged the President to appoint a new chairman of the party and begin rebuilding the whole organization. According to Clifford the Democratic party had grown stale and needed new men with new ideas to restore its vitality. The President should work to improve his own image too. Leading labor officials should be invited to the White House for conferences as should businessmen such as Henry Ford II or intellectuals such as Albert Einstein. This Clifford thought would help erase the picture of an "irresponsible" man whose only diversion was playing poker.

Clifford further thought it advisable for Truman to make non-political tours similar to those made by Roosevelt in 1940. This would enable him, while not yet being the official candidate of the Democrats, to start the badly needed campaigning prior to the Democratic convention. If the public saw Truman on a non-political

coast-to-coast tour, they would not analyze it closely, but rather simply see the President carrying out the functions of his office.[3]

Truman, after carefully reading the memo and discussing it at length with Clifford, agreed to follow the general strategy outlined. He refused, however, to comply with such publicity tricks as inviting labor leaders, Henry Ford, or Einstein to the White House. But the major points, Truman agreed to start implementing with his January 7 State of the Union Message.

In accordance with the Clifford memo, Truman's State of the Union Message requested federal action to end discrimination, federal aid to education, higher unemployment compensation, a federal system of medical insurance, a continuation of rent control, more TVA schemes, price supports and cooperatives and expansion of REA, and an anti-inflation program. In foreign affairs he stated the goal of world peace through the United Nations. From February to June, Truman steadily barraged Congress with requests for the enaction of the legislation proposed in his January, 1947, message.

By June, he was ready for his "non-political" campaign by rail. Major speeches were planned for Chicago, Omaha, Seattle, Berkley, and Los Angeles. Truman spoke from planned texts at first and later with more success,

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[3]Clifford Memo, Truman Library, Clifford Papers.

extemporaneously from the back platform of the train at hundreds of small spots along the way, thus publicizing himself and his program to the people. At first the turnouts were sparse and various mishaps occurred, including some bobbles made by Truman in his speeches, but by the end of the trip, the whistle stop campaign had turned into the successful political maneuver envisioned by Clifford.

One of the implications included in the memo was used by Truman in his acceptance address made before the Democratic national convention. He announced that he would call a special session of Congress to pass the legislation which Republicans had recently promised in their platform. He planned to request legislation designed to halt inflation, laws to meet the housing shortage, federal aid to education, a national health program, civil rights legislation, and an increase in the minimum wage. Truman set the date for the session on July 26, called "Turnip Day" in Missouri, hence the name of the special session. The President knew that the Republican Congress was too conservative to pass these measures but by not passing them the American people might question the sincerity of the Republican platform. Thomas E. Dewey, the Republican nominee for President advised the Congress to pass some bills that the Republican party advocated but it refused. Instead they passed a weakened

version of a housing bill and one calling for consumer and bank credit controls.[4] Thus, Truman succeeded in exposing the hollowness of the Republican campaign platform.

Following Truman's June "non-political" tour and the Democratic convention, Truman began a vigorous and effective coast-to-coast campaign running from Labor Day to Election Day. His trip included traveling over 20,000 miles and delivering over 250 speeches. These speeches contained a sense of conservatism--Truman emphasized consolidating the New Deal gains.

As Kirkendall points out, Truman did not work alone in his campaign. Democratic politicians and party members accompanied him on his tour as did three of his cabinet members who campaigned vigorously for him: Attorney General Tom C. Clark, Secretary of Agriculture Charles F. Brannan, and Secretary of Labor Maurice J. Tobin. Clark emphasized the Communist threat and the administration's solution to it, the loyalty program; Brannan spoke to farm groups, and Tobin attacked the Taft-Hartley Act. State and local Democratic organizations worked as tirelessly for Truman as did the Democratic National Committee.

In general Truman followed the advice of Clifford and other liberals to the extent that the Truman candidacy could be categorized as a little left of center. Liberal advisers spearheaded Truman's campaign. Clifford and

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[4]Kirkendall, "The Presidential Election," p. 414.

William Batt, head of the Research Division, were the most important advisers--they emphasized the necessity of concentrating on the former Roosevelt supporters, especially the workers, the veterans, and the Negroes. To do this they advised Truman to emphasize the shortcomings of the Eightieth Congress thereby alerting the people of the necessity of preserving the social gains of the Roosevelt era.[5] While not heavily emphasizing foreign policy, his advisers urged Truman to show that his policies would insure peace while the election of another might lead to war.

In becoming increasingly liberal Truman did not appear especially concerned with the South. While the southern problem received little attention from administration advisers, they did encourage Truman's tour of the South, suggesting that he discuss the economic gains of the South under Roosevelt. As Kirkendall says, the advisers hoped that "the South's interest in economic liberalism, in addition to its attachment to the Democratic party, would offset its hostility to racial liberalism."[6]

Kenneth M. Birkhead, Associate Director of Public Relations for the Research Division of the Democratic National Committee, said Truman's advisers did not worry too much about Thurmond. Truman decided that he could gain nothing, not even the South, by being anti-civil rights so

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[5] Ibid., p. 415. [6] Ibid.

he gave token support for civil rights. According to Birkhead, ". . . we just didn't worry too much about Strom Thurmond. Like the Wallace thing, we kept track of it and we'd watch what they were saying, this kind of thing, but we didn't do too much with it."[7]

In a memo of October 27, Jack Beal and Frank McNaughton, other presidential campaign advisers, reported that the Democratic party need not worry about the splintering of the party by the Dixiecrats. They did not see the Dixiecrats as such a severe threat for several reasons. In the first place, the southern Democrats could never control the country alone, and they could not expect help from the Republicans. The civil rights legislation would be enacted eventually anyway and probably by a Republican Congress. With the passage of civil rights, other issues would cease to be a source of contention within the Democratic party; instead, it would make the South angry at the GOP and lead Democrats to unify. Moreover, liberals in the South could be counted on to minimize the chances of a real split in the party. Despite the economic progress of the South these advisers predicted no substantial change in southern politics. Finally, they noted that the Democrats would either "get together, or they would all get sacked

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[7]Transcript of Interview, Kenneth M. Birkhead, July 7, 1966, Truman Library.

together." This election would teach the Democrats that they must stay together in order to win.[8]

It was true that southern Democrats could not numerically control Congress but the memo underestimated the possibility of a conservative Democratic-Republican coalition. Such a conservative coalition later emerged to delay civil rights legislation and other liberal measures. That southern politics would not be affected by economic changes was also later disproven. Lacking the accuracy of the Clifford Memo, this memo still doubtlessly influenced the Democratic campaign.

In planning his campaign schedule Truman faced the question of whether to tour the South. Because Wallace had encountered many unpleasant incidents on his southern tour, most of Truman's advisers felt it would be better for him to avoid campaigning in the southern states leaving this chore to the native loyal Democrats, particularly in the Deep South.[9] In addition to the problem of speaking to segregated audiences, there would also be the persistent question of speaking on civil rights.[10]

Howard McGrath, nevertheless, announced in mid-August that the President would undertake a "barnstorming

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[8]Memorandum, Frank McNaughton to Paul Fitzpatrick, October 27, 1948, Truman Library, Frank McNaughton Papers.

[9]Memorandum, Clark Clifford to the President, June 14, 1948, Clifford Papers, Speech File.

[10]Ibid.

tour through the Deep South to challenge the states' rights advocates in their home territory." The presidential advisers were aware of the deep loyalty of the South to the party, and Truman kept insisting that not all southerners were as opposed to his program as the southern leaders would have him think.[11] By mid-September McGrath and others, figuring that it was too much of a risk for Truman to campaign in the South, announced he would go to Texas and Oklahoma and possibly Arkansas but not further south than that.[12] Truman arrived in El Paso on September 25 where he was greeted by Governor Jester, Sam Rayburn, and Tom Clark. His breakfast with John Nance Garner at his Uvalde home, was played up widely by the press.[13] Truman's visit with Garner was a stroke of political ingenuity for if Garner, a conservative and highly respected southerner supported Truman, then other Texans might safely do likewise.[14] Truman found large friendly crowds in Texas. Even Governor Jester, who so bitterly disliked Truman's stand on civil rights and tidelands, played a major role in entertaining Truman in Fort Worth where Jester publicly promised Truman the support of Texas in the election.

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[11] New York Times, August 19, 1948.

[12] "Campaign Strategy," New Republic, CXIX (September 20, 1948), 6.

[13] New York Times, September 27, 1948.

[14] Ibid.

The day Truman arrived in El Paso, he received a wire from Thurmond asking him to discuss issues such as civil rights and tidelands with Texans. Apparently Truman never bothered to answer this one nor a similar request made later by Thurmond. Rayburn said of Thurmond's telegram: "It is the damndest effrontery I ever heard of."[15] Merritt Gibson telegraphed McGrath, requesting that he persuade Truman to discuss the issues, but he received no reply. Never once in his four-day tour of Texas did Truman mention either of the issues.[16]

On October 16, Truman spoke at Raleigh, North Carolina, where he was greeted by Governor Greg Cherry.[17] Pleading for unity he predicted that the Dixiecrats would get nowhere in November, and that true southerners who were individualistic should not be ruled by prejudice and emotion.[18] Barkley, campaigning in Asheville, North Carolina, warned southern Democrats that if they voted for anyone other than Truman, they would be casting a vote for the Republicans. According to the Vice-Presidential candidate, it would "be a tragic thing if the partnership between the Democratic party and the states of the South

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[15]"Smoke 'Em Out Harry," October 1, 1948, Laney Papers, Unfiled.

[16]Ibid.

[17]New York Times, October 19, 1948.

[18]Ibid., October 20, 1948.

were to be destroyed."[19] If the South placed itself outside the Democratic party, it would have no means at all of advancing its goals; he advocated that southerners work out their differences within the party. Some fragmentary groups, he said, "have been attracted by sincere interests, some by distortion of issues and some by misunderstanding of these issues."[20] In New Orleans on October 16, when Barkley asked Democrats to return to the party, he received his coolest reception since he started campaigning October 1. He then avoided mentioning civil rights and efforts to keep Truman off the ballot in Louisiana.[21]

In the South, loyal Democrats campaigned for Truman. Congressman Sam Rayburn, Senator Barkley, Brannan, and a host of prominent southerners like Senators George of Georgia and Pepper of Florida, and Governors Folsom of Alabama and Kefauver of Tennessee publicly worked in behalf of the President. Numerous other loyal Democrats were responsible for keeping Truman on the ballot in some of the southern states.[22]

The only speech in the whole campaign on civil rights was delivered, appropriately enough, in Harlem. While civil

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[19] New York Herald Tribune, September 28, 1948.

[20] Ibid.

[21] New York Times, October 17, 1948.

[22] Kirkendall, "The Presidential Election," pp. 417-18.

rights was one of the most significant issues of the campaign and one which was instrumental to Truman's success, the irony is that it received so little attention during the campaign.

In his speech, the first ever delivered by an American President in Harlem, he praised his committee's work on civil rights and reaffirmed the ideas of his February 2 civil rights message. Some black leaders thought it expedient to openly support Truman since he had done more for blacks than had any previous President. If blacks failed to support a man who espoused their cause, future candidates might simply write off blacks and do nothing for them.[23]

Such was the strategy, campaigning, and planning of Harry Truman and the Democrats. Meanwhile other political parties busily campaigned for the programs and policies that they thought would be necessary and beneficial to the nation. In addition to the parties carved out of the Democratic party but expounding different programs, other groups represented in this contest included the Socialists, National Prohibitionists, the Christian Nationalists, Socialist Workers and Socialist Laborites, and the Communists, who had a platform but no candidate for the Presidency.[24] These minor

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[23]Ross, Loneliest Campaign, p. 238.

[24]Kirk H. Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson, comps., National Party Platforms, 1840-1960 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), p. 419. Hereinafter referred to as Porter and Johnson, National Party Platforms.

but seemingly perpetual parties posed no threat to the Democrats.

Thomas E. Dewey, Governor of New York, was Truman's chief worry. The resounding Republican victory of 1946 and the pro-Dewey public opinion polls led Truman to concentrate his campaign against the Republicans. Dewey had made a rapid ascent in political circles. As district attorney at the age of thirty-five in New York County, his success as a "racket buster" gave him the confidence to run for governor. Although he was defeated, it was by such a small margin that by 1940 he attempted to win the Republican Presidential nomination, only to lose to Wendell Wilkie. In 1942, he again ran and won election as Governor of New York, a springboard for his Presidential candidacy in 1944. This race left him as titular head of the party and the best known of the possible Republican choices for 1948.

In spite of the comment by Alice Roosevelt Longworth, Theodore Roosevelt's daughter and a critical observer of Washington figures, "you can't make a souffle rise twice," most of the Republicans believed otherwise. Dewey was often chided by the press and the public for his appearance which they said was analogous to the groom on top of a wedding cake. He was an experienced politician despite his stiff public manner and bad press. His Vice-Presidential running mate, Governor Earl Warren of

California, who at first pursued the Presidency but was no match for the popular Dewey, was a wise choice. He was immensely popular in his home state which had a coveted number of electoral votes; he was a liberal and he would provide a good geographical balance for the Republican ticket.

The Republican party, like the Democratic party, was split into liberal and conservative wings. At the outset of the Republican convention Senator Robert A. Taft, actual leader of the conservative Republicans appeared to be Dewey's strongest opponent. This faction of the party, however, was not in control of the convention, thus, by the third ballot Dewey was nominated unanimously.

An analysis of the Republican platform indicates that the international point of view determined the foreign policy while the liberals directed domestic policy. In the area of foreign policy, the platform advocated support of the United Nations and the containment policy, issues upon which both factions of the party agreed. But on domestic issues there was little agreement. The platform included even though the Eightieth Congress had rejected, civil rights legislation, control of inflation, public housing, and a higher minimum wage. The presidential wing of the party tried to appease conservative as well as southern Democrats by omitting issues such as federal aid to education and the FEPC.[25]

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[25] Ibid., pp. 450-54.

In spite of these intra-party disagreements Republicans looked forward to victory and Dewey, so confident of success, did comparatively little campaigning. Refusing to criticize Truman on vulnerable points, he campaigned like a gentleman; he was reluctant to make promises to people in order to win votes, and to keep his own party in tact, he frequently resorted to generalizations rather than making specific points.

While the Republicans were obviously the most formidable opponents of the Democrats, the most feared minor party participating in the election of 1948 was the Progressive party. Unique in its origin and program, and strongly influenced by the Communists, this political group made a distinct imprint on the campaign tactics and the policies of the Democratic party.

Henry Wallace, a former Vice-President and Secretary of Agriculture, though not a Communist allowed himself to be their pawn. Wallace was a puzzling figure to those who knew him. He was aloof and mysterious in his habits and beliefs which included an interest in Eastern mysticism.[26]

His involvement in a third party effort began in 1946 when he disagreed with Truman over the administration's foreign policy. On September 12, as Secretary of Agriculture he made a speech in Madison Square Garden highly critical of American policy toward the Soviet Union, whereupon

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[26]Ross, Loneliest Campaign, p. 144.

Truman asked him to resign from the Cabinet. He then became an editor of the New Republic, a liberal journal, but his interest in this quickly faded as he grew increasingly active in politics.

In December, 1946, a group of liberals and Communists joined together to found the Progressive Citizens of America, an organization which championed traditional liberal causes. Although Wallace was not a member of the Progressive Citizens of America, he agreed to run on their ticket as their Presidential candidate, publicly announcing his intentions on December 29, 1947. His Vice-Presidential running mate, Glen Taylor, presented another unlikely choice as an American leader. A western singer and cowboy, Glen Taylor won the Idaho senate race in 1944. He had been an ardent admirer of Roosevelt and the Democrats, until he broke with Truman over foreign policy matters concerning Russia.

As expected the Communist party, consisting of over 60,000 members in 1947, developed an interest in the Wallace candidacy. Although this party made no direct statement claiming Wallace as a candidate of their party, they supported him in every other way. Communist leaders and newspapers actively backed Wallace whose ideas in foreign policy agreed with those of the party. For example, Wallace vociferously denounced the Marshall Plan while blaming Harry Truman and American imperialism for the origins

and continuation of the cold war. Envisioning a world based on the United Nations, Wallace opposed further American military buildup while proposing the destruction of atomic weapons.[27] Containment, according to Wallace, was just another name for imperialism--a course, which if continued would ultimately lead to nuclear warfare. As the Wallace campaign continued, Soviet policy seemed determined to undermine his efforts. Following the Czechoslavakia coup and the Berlin blockade, Wallace's rhetoric became even more suspect to the American public.

On domestic issues the Progressive party condemned the peace time draft, all forms of segregation and discrimination, along with the loyalty programs and oaths. It called for price controls, more TVA projects, repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act, price supports for agriculture, an extension of social security, public housing, national health programs, the eighteen-year-old vote, and federal aid to education.[28] Wallace made it clear that his program had no intention of abandoning capitalism but that he was concerned with patching the system up.

The intensity of the Wallace effort in 1948 was easily the equivalent of two or three ordinary campaigns.

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[27] New York Times, July 28, 1948.

[28] Porter and Johnson, National Party Platforms, pp. 436-47.

But Wallace was no ordinary candidate nor was his campaign an orthodox one. Unlike the traditional party rallies, people willingly paid to hear him speak and to hear the musical entertainment that opened and closed each meeting. He campaigned vigorously in the South but with little success. Unlike Truman, he emphasized civil rights while on his eight-day tour of the South and by refusing to speak to segregated audiences he caused an uproar wherever he went. In Durham, North Carolina, he was greeted with a flood of eggs, firecrackers, and hecklers which succeeded in drowning out his speech. He met further resistance as he moved across Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Tennessee. As Time magazine noted, if he had done little else he had at least exposed racism at its worst.[29]

The press gave wide publicity to the unusual manner of the Wallace campaign and to Wallace's numerous idiosyncrasies. Wallace frequently made intemperate comments which the press enjoyed exploiting. For example, in Salem, Oregon, Wallace suggested that the government buy up submarginal lands to discourage settlement there and if people still insisted on living there, they should be prevented by the government from having children.[30] When the press learned of the so-called "Guru letters," a series of mystically inclined letters written to a cult leader and

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[29]Ross, Loneliest Campaign, pp. 226-27.

[30]New York Post, May 25, 1948.

signed by Wallace, they continually badgered the Progressive candidate about them. Instead of explaining his connection with the letters or admitting to authorship, Wallace chose to remain silent thereby allowing the press to speculate.[31] These and numerous other similar actions by Wallace alienated many of his potential followers and labeled Wallace as a crackpot.

Although the Progressive campaign was the longest of the four major campaigns waged in 1948, the momentum of the movement declined rapidly after the Progressive convention. While Soviet aggressive actions undercut his appeal in foreign policy, the public may well have tired of Wallace. The critical attitude of the press also accounted for the decline of his appeal. By election time the Progressives pulled their candidates out of all state and local races in order to avoid splitting the liberal vote.

While the Progressives declined in strength, the Dixiecrats made their move. Unlike the other parties, the Dixiecrats, because of their late start had to work out organizational details during their campaign. The wonder is not that the party was frequently uncoordinated and non-functional but that it worked at all. On July 28, Thurmond and Wright issued to the press the party's plans, organizations, and personnel. The Executive Committee

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[31] New York Times, July 24, 1948.

consisted of: Ben Laney, Chairman; members were Frank Dixon and R. T. Goodwyn of Alabama; J. O. Emmerich and Everett Truly of Mississippi; Frank Upchurch and C. E. Shepard of Florida; Arch Rowan and Palmer Bradley of Texas; John Daggett and C. E. Parker of Arkansas; W. P. Baskin and George Warren of South Carolina; Judge Leander Perez and Frank J. Looney of Louisiana. These men would conduct the actual campaign along with a steering committee composed of Governor Laney, Chairman Frank Dixon of Alabama, W. W. Wright of Mississippi, Judge Perez of Louisiana, Arch Rowan from Texas, and R. M. Figg of South Carolina. Judge Merritt Gibson of Longview, Texas, was the national campaign director, and George C. Wallace from the Capital National Bank of Jackson, Mississippi, was the national campaign treasurer.

The national headquarters of the party was scheduled to open August 9, in the Heidelberg Hotel, Jackson, Mississippi. Liaison offices would open also in Columbia, South Carolina and in Washington, D.C.[32] The first mention of establishing a Washington Bureau was made by Horace Wilkinson, who suggested hiring someone for $50,000 a year whose duty it would be to defend the South against the attacks to which it was being subjected. Wilkinson contended that if the southerners would put an economic

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[32]Letter, Horace Wilkinson to Ben Laney, May 17, 1948, Laney Papers, Employ the Physically Handicapped Week File.

boycott on northern goods, it would cause the North to think twice about supporting Truman's program. The bureau, he felt, should be controlled by the southern governors, and it should be run by a man who was "cold blooded" and who had only one objective: "The economic and political destruction of all forces opposed to the South." Wilkinson believed that "South baiting" could be made politically unprofitable. Fortunately for the Dixiecrats they did not always follow all of Wilkinson's advice.[33] However, they did pass a resolution providing for the creation of the States' Rights Foundation with its headquarters in Washington, D.C. The purpose of the Foundation and its bureau was to disseminate information concerning states' rights and the meaning of the Constitution.[34]

Immediately after the opening of the national headquarters on August 9, the Dixiecrats sought to get the party on the ballot in all of the forty-eight states. But it was late and the time limit required for getting on the ballot was expiring in several states; the Dixiecrats sought to discover legal avenues of meeting this important objective. Party workers proceeded to file numerous suits and countersuits in v ious states in an effort to get the party on the ballot.

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Resolution, Laney Papers, Southern Governor's Conference File.

By August 25, the states of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina had chosen electors who were pledged to the Dixiecrats and who would be listed under the Democratic label. Petitions were being circulated in Arkansas, California, Indiana, Kentucky, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Virginia--all these states had different requirements as to the number of names needed for the party to be listed. Write-in campaigns were underway in Maryland and Oklahoma.[35]

Some of the difficulties involved in the struggle for getting on the ballots can be clearly seen in the case of Indiana. Although the SRD obtained the eleven thousand required signatures before the deadline, the legality of the petition was challenged by the Truman and Wallace supporters there. The Dixiecrat representative sent to Indiana had arranged that payment would be made to the men circulating the petition according to the number of names they obtained, and since filing deadlines were close at hand, the Dixiecrats did not have time to check the validity of the petitions. Consequently, they created so many fake names that the petition in Indiana eventually was declared illegal.[36]

The most persistent problem faced by the Dixiecrats was the lack of funds necessary for waging a Presidential

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[35] "Newsletter," Black Folder, Gibson Papers.

[36] Ibid.

campaign. In August, following the discussion of their financial situation at a campaign committee meeting in Birmingham, the party leaders agreed to urge all state chairmen to organize local groups to collect funds. Each state was asked to raise ten thousand dollars per electoral vote and the States' Rights Newsletter suggested that buttons be distributed to those who contributed one dollar or more. Since most of the money that the SRD collected consisted of small personal donations by people with small incomes, they never had enough money to carry out a really efficient campaign.[37]

Failure to file an account of the party's contributions and expenses in accordance with the Hatch Act caused much adverse publicity for the SRD's. Their explanation for this oversight was that the firm of certified public accountants misinterpreted the deadline for filing, and thinking it was October 20, not September 10, as the law stipulated. When they finally submitted the report the Dixiecrats claimed to have collected $13,449.78 and spent $14,890.53, which left them with a deficit of $1,440.75. The largest individual contribution had been $540.00.[38]

The lack of funds jeopardized the publicity efforts of the party. An inadequate amount of literature and radio time hampered the campaign effort severely but the Dixiecrats did have some effective means of propaganda.

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

For example, in Mississippi, the theaters ran a three-minute movie trailer made by Governor Wright that explained the movement. The tight budget, however, limited considerably the distribution of this film.[39] Another idea which might have aided their cause was a special campaign train to tour the South but this too was impossible because of the expense. The SRD tried also to publicize the cause at the numerous fairs held during the months of September and October. In Mississippi small booths were located in the center of the Commercial Building where literature and buttons were distributed.[40]

The national organization branched out through the veterans, the college, and the women's divisions which operated in each state. For the women's division the SRD called for a woman chairman in each state to direct the activities of the women in her state, to organize women's clubs, and to hold statewide mass meetings. From each county there was a chairman whose purpose was to see to it that all voters, but women in particular, voted in November for the SRD.

At election time booths were set up at central locations so that buttons and literature could be distributed and funds could be collected. Telephone committees were established with instructions for calls to be made between 9:00 and 11:30 A.M. and between 2:00 and

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

5:00 P.M. The message suggested was: "I am calling to ask you to help preserve our constitutional right of local self-government by voting on November 2, for the States' Rights Democrats electors."[41] All women who could write or speak were asked to do so at every opportunity and women who were free on November 2, were asked to take voters to the polls.[42]

The college division of the SRD opened its activities on August 7, with its headquarters at the Heidelberg Hotel in Jackson, Mississippi. Ken Doshotel, Chairman of the College Division reported that clubs had been formed on the campuses of several schools in the states of the Deep South with varying degrees of success. The fee for membership to these clubs helped the sagging SRD campaign chest, and college students distributed literature in their states. According to Doshotel, who personally visited most of these campuses, college students were poorly informed of the principles of constitutional government. He subsequently suggested that more history and government courses be taught, presumably with an idea of stressing the virtues of states' rights.[43]

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[41] "Handbook for Women's Organization" (Jackson, Mississippi: National States' Rights Democrats Campaign Committee, 1948).

[42] Ibid.

[43] "Report of College and University Division," by Ken Doshotel, November 4, 1948, Gibson Papers.

Campaign newsletters were distributed to all state chairmen, field representatives, and a select group of other leaders who were connected with the national headquarters. The Newsletter invited all who were interested in "preserving the principles of American government as expounded by Thomas Jefferson," to join their movement.

The leader of this fourth party movement was Strom Thurmond of South Carolina. Thurmond, who characterizes himself as a liberal southerner, was born and spent his childhood in Edgefield, South Carolina, a town famous for producing governors and other politicians. After graduating from Clemson College with a major in Agricultural Science and English, he taught agriculture at several small schools in and near Edgefield for the next five years before becoming the superintendent of Education in Edgefield County. By 1930 he gained admittance to the South Carolina bar after completing a home study course in law but law was just a springboard to politics for Thurmond. His political career began in 1933 when he was elected state senator from Edgefield County, a position he retained until 1938 when he was selected as circuit judge. The coming of the war interrupted Thurmond's political career only briefly, for in 1946 he successfully ran for governor.

Alberta Lachicotte, echoing Thurmond's self-characterization emphasizes that as governor he was a

liberal, "by southern standards."[44] She points to his accomplishments in race relations in the state emphasizing his establishment of industrial training schools for Negro girls, his improvement of existing parks and health centers for blacks, his revamping of the whole school system, and his appeals for higher salaries for black and white teachers alike. He set a precedent in the South Carolina legal annals when he ordered the arrest and trial of white men who lynched a black. When he advocated the repeal of the poll tax in South Carolina, he incurred the charge of being too progressive.

A devout believer in states' rights and an outspoken opponent of civil rights, Thurmond was the ideal man to lead the Dixiecrat crusade. As a candidate he received a great deal of well-deserved criticism but was the victim of slander as well. One of the most widespread rumors of that election year was that Thurmond had an illegitimate daughter whose educational and living expenses he covered. The story, especially tailored for Thurmond, explained that the daughter was black.[45] Apparently without foundation, the rumor plagued Thurmond throughout the campaign while his supporters, denouncing the rumor, diligently worked for his election.

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[44]Lachicotte, Rebel Senator, p. 47.

[45]Robert Sherrill, Gothic Politics in the Deep South: Stars of the New Confederacy (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1968), p. 284. Hereinafter referred to as Sherrill, Gothic Politics.

Robert Sherrill, southern journalist, writes that Thurmond perfectly represented the "god-fearing, salt-of-the earth folks who swim in the same rivers they dump their raw sewage into" and who "set up auto junkyards next to college campuses, and feel that poached eggs are only for sick people."[46] By and large his greatest appeal was to those least secure in their economic and social status. Admittedly Thurmond also represented people of a somewhat higher level of sophistication than that outlined by Sherrill. His support was solid enough that at the conclusion of the SRD campaign, Thurmond managed to stay alive politically.

When Thurmond left the Governor's office in 1951 he practiced law until 1954 when he was elected to the United States Senate in a write-in campaign against state senator Edgar Brown. The first person ever elected to a major office in the United States by this method, he was later re-elected twice as a Democrat and once as a Republican. From his senatorial position he has consistently been the mouthpiece of southern reactionaries. For example, he commandeered a twenty-four hour and eighteen minute filibuster against the 1957 civil rights legislation. Speaking with disdain of President Lyndon Johnson's "disgraceful We Shall Overcome message" in April, 1965, Thurmond claimed that he did not clap even once during

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[46] Ibid., p. 258.

the whole speech in spite of the piercing stare of Mrs. Johnson.[47]

His reputation as an ultra-conservative and a maverick have been proven by his consistent support of the traditional Republican-southern Democratic coalition. At every juncture throughout the fifties and sixties he fought civil rights legislation and the "radically liberal, socialistic" programs of Kennedy and Johnson.

Thurmond's real political dilemma, however, came when ultra-conservative Barry Goldwater was nominated for the Presidency by the Republicans in 1964. Thurmond, finding Goldwater's philosophy closer to his own than that of any other Congressman, felt it necessary to make an announcement of support. As early as 1961 Thurmond had expressed a desire to see the American political party abandon the old less descriptive titles of Democrat and Republican for the more accurate labels of liberal and conservative. With President Lyndon Johnson's selection of Hubert Humphrey as his running mate, Thurmond began openly campaigning for Goldwater in the South at large and then in a more concentrated manner in his home state.

For Thurmond to campaign in behalf of Goldwater simply involved updating his earlier campaign speeches and including other issues in addition to that of states' rights. Much of the rhetoric was the same:

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[47] Ibid., pp. 271-72.

> The Democratic Party has abandoned the people, . . . has invaded the private lives of the people by using the powers of government for coercion and intimidation of individuals . . . has rammed through Congress unconstitutional, impractical, unworkable, and oppressive legislation . . . has encouraged lawlessness, civil unrest, and mob actions.[48]

The "Thurmond blitz" in South Carolina was successful, for this election of 1964 marked the first time that South Carolina had voted Republican since 1876.

Lachicotte, never finding fault with Thurmond, praised him for his tremendous courage in changing parties and supporting Goldwater. "To jump from a winning team to a losing one . . . required mettle and an undauntable spirit," reports Lachicotte who failed to mention Thurmond's loss of his ten years of seniority as a Democrat.[49] Changing parties did nothing to alter the reactionary views of Thurmond who continues to be vocal in his opposition to civil rights legislation.[50]

As the Dixiecrat Presidential hopeful Thurmond waged a strenuous campaign. According to Merritt Gibson, Thurmond wanted to speak at every "little pigtrail" and was only reluctantly persuaded to speak at places where a sizeable gathering could be mustered.[51]

Thurmond's speeches were always based upon one issue, that of states' rights, or, more correctly, the

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[48]Lachicotte, Rebel Senator, p. 238.

[49]Ibid., p. 243. [50]Ibid.

[51]Merritt Gibson, Private Interview, Longview, Texas, April, 1970.

civil rights program of President Truman. The States' Rights candidate analyzed the four parts of the civil rights program which were most inimical to the South: the anti-poll tax law, the anti-lynching law, the FEPC with its federal police force and the abolition of segregation. Economic issues were rarely mentioned in the course of Thurmond's speeches unless they were placed in a historic context, nor did the tidelands issue receive any notable attention.

Thurmond contended that the civil rights committee report lay unnoticed until a congressional election in the Bronx in New York occurred. The defeat of Boss Ed Flynn by a Wallace man was seen by the Democratic leaders as a threat, thus indicating that Wallace was capable of winning votes of "small pressure blocs." At this juncture, Truman decided to deliver his civil rights message to Congress.[52] Thurmond saw the civil rights program, not only as politically motivated but as unconstitutional and as a program that would ruin states' rights. He consistently quoted or referred to the tenth amendment to point out how the Truman Administration was ignoring states' rights. The major parties were overlooking this law because they were "engaged in a cheap political scramble to gain the votes of the minorities."[53] Accusing the

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[52]Speech, J. Strom Thurmond, March 17, 1948, Thurmond Papers, States Rights File.

[53]Ibid., July 31, 1948.

Democrats of having an insatiable thirst for power, he added that people know their madness," and "will not stand for it."[54] Thurmond saw the civil rights program as a product of those who were "working like beavers to turn this into a socialistic state."[55] He emphasized the necessity of returning the running of the American government to the people or to the states. "We must rid ourselves," he railed, "of the regimentation that is slowly making us slaves of Washington." "And," he continued, the people must "learn to look every Washington gift horse in the mouth, and examine it for Communistic slanders." Thurmond emphasized the necessity of protecting the Constitution from all kinds of attacks including telling the disgruntled minorities "that the Presidency of the United States is not for sale."[56] He warned that civil rights legislation would end all the constitutional precedents on the division of power between the state and federal government.[57]

The whole program of civil rights, Thurmond claimed, was in essence a renewal of Reconstruction measures. Reconstruction, he explained, was a black period in American history for the South, a period from which it had taken the South seventy-five years to recover. After the war the South was burdened with an unfair

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid., September 30, 1948.

freight rate system which prevented the South from competing with northern manufacturers. "This kept the South a 'crown colony' status, producing raw materials for the industrial East, and buying back their finished goods at high prices."[58] The South was still working to correct this inequity, said Thurmond, along with the unfair tariff. The tariff caused the South to purchase eastern products that had protection against world competition, while at the same time the raw materials of the South had no equivalent protection.[59]

The anti-poll tax law in itself was not offensive, Thurmond explained, as he personally had been a leading advocate of its repeal in the state of South Carolina. He saw the tax as a measure of revenue only and not a burden on the right to vote; besides to many the issue seemed insignificant since only seven states out of the forty-eight still retained this tax. But the Dixiecrats, viewing this action by Congress as a violation of the constitutional provision that gave the states the power to determine suffrage requirements, envisioned a form of federal suffrage leading ultimately to a centralized government free from the requirements of state or of local self-government.[60]

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[58] Ibid., September 23, 1948. [59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid., March 17, 1948.

Similarly, the anti-lynching law in itself was not objectionable, but was unconstitutional according to the Dixiecrat interpretation. The federal government had no right to handle crimes that occurred within a given state; legally and constitutionally it could deal only with federal crimes. The states had laws against murder and some specific laws and penalties to deal with lynchings, a crime that was practically non-existent. Thurmond's figures showed that in one year 75 per cent of those lynched were white, but he gave no date and was not very specific in his statement.[61] At one point Thurmond called the anti-lynching bill a federal police bill in disguise that would give the federal government unlimited power in the area of crime control. Pointing out that some 325 murders were committed in New York City in the year 1946, Thurmond said the federal government had said nothing about a federal police force for that area. There was only one lynching in 1947 in the whole country, yet, this was significant enough to substantiate the need for federal crime control. "Regardless of what good causes a Federal police system is alleged to serve, we are opposed to this step toward dictatorship."[62] He compared Lidice, the village that the Germans totally destroyed in World War II, in order to punish a few individuals, with the

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[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid., August 26, 1948.

kind of punishment that would be inflicted as a result of the Truman program. The Democrats had proposed levying a fine of $10,000 against a whole town or county where a lynching occurred, but the Dixiecrats felt that the idea of penalizing a whole community for the action of one of its members was wrong.[63]

On the issue of segregation, Thurmond thought civil strife would abound if it was abolished:

> Lawlessness will be rampant. Chaos will prevail. Our streets will be unsafe. And there will be the greatest breakdown of law enforcement in the history of the nation.
>
> Let us also tell them, that in the South, the intermingling of the races in our homes, in our schools, and in our theatres is impractical and impossible.[64]

This attempt to stir up racial and religious hatred for political advantage, Thurmond expounded, was the lowest of all political tricks. "If corrupt machine politicians feel that they must play politics with the race issue, let them play at it in their own dirty back yards!" Thurmond asserted.[65]

Thurmond, continually pointing to the dangers of integration, appealed to many parents when he brought up the subject of raising and educating children. Mothers should have the right to send their children to a public or private school where their children would be taught by

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid., October 6, 1948.

[65] Ibid., July 31, 1948.

"proper" teachers and associate with "proper" people. Thurmond contended that no authority, including the federal government, should have the right to tell you that "your child must sit beside, play with, or share his lunch with children that you don't want your boy or girl to associate with."[66] This, Thurmond said, would be the situation if Truman's program were enforced. American mothers, who have never needed advice or permission by a governmental agency on raising children, soon would be given such directions. Thurmond compared this to the Hitler Youth Movement where children were indoctrinated to oppose religion, scorn adult discipline, and act as spies for the state against their own parents.[67]

In several speeches Thurmond denounced integration in the army saying that it was an unforgivable move, especially since "our military leaders tell us that it will be at the sacrifice of the morale of our soldiers and threaten the safety of the country itself."[68] According to Thurmond, the people of the United States "do not want their sons subjected to an unnecessary hazard, simply to allow politicians of this country to appeal to bloc votes."[69]

Thurmond, characterizing the Fair Employment Commission as legislation that would control the hiring and firing of people within private businesses and industries, saw this

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[66] Ibid., August 26, 1948. [67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid., September 23, 1948 [69] Ibid.

also as an unconstitutional invasion of the rights of the people by the federal government. The FEPC, as Thurmond viewed it, would enable Communists to infiltrate the government more efficiently by forcing saboteurs into various industrial plants. This law, Thurmond explained, was an emulation of Stalin's "all Races Law" written in 1920 which helped Stalin achieve his position as "supreme dictator of Soviet Russia."[70]

To enforce the civil rights program a federal police agency operating within the Department of Justice was the "most alarming" part of the President's program.

> The concept of a Federal police force working within the States is utterly foreign to the Constitution of the United States. Gestapo-like agents would rove throughout the nation; policing elections; meddling with private businesses; intervening in private lawsuits; breeding litigation; keeping the people in a state of duress and intimidation; and bringing to our people all of the potential evils of a so-called police state.[71]

Earlier when Truman had explained that the federal police force was necessary to enforce the anti-lynching bill and the FEPT because the FBI was not trained in handling civil rights matters, Thurmond agreed, saying "our FBI has never been trained in Russian methods."[72]

Thurmond frequently alluded to the loyalty of the South to the Democratic party as the prime reason for the

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[70] Ibid., September 6, 1948.

[71] Ibid., March 17, 1948.

[72] Ibid., September 25, 1948.

continuing strength of the party. Because of this unswerving loyalty, Thurmond said, "never did we dream that a Democratic President would stab us in the back" by enforcing such vicious anti-southern laws.[73] He raised the question of defining party loyalty by contending that the States' Rights Democrats were still loyal to the party, and the disloyal were those who were presently in control. They were responsible for subverting the revered principles for which the Democratic party had long stood. Thurmond's favorite analogy on loyalty was to raise the question of what would people do if the preacher of their church was suddenly no longer practicing his religion but instead was preaching contrary doctrines. His answer was that they would withdraw, taking the church with them. They would be loyal not to the church building nor to the faithless preacher, but to their traditional beliefs. To Thurmond, the loyal Democrat was the man willing to stand up for the traditional party beliefs.[74] Thurmond said the SRD did not desert the party but rather it was stolen from them by the crooked big city bosses who undermined the ideals of the Democratic party.[75]

The Dixiecrat candidate stated that at Philadelphia the South was abused and humiliated by the "collectivist

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[73] Ibid., March 17, 1948.

[74] Ibid., August 26, 1948.

[75] Ibid., August 28, 1948.

crew" in charge there. When the Democratic convention abandoned the ideals of Jefferson, "Democracy caught the train for Birmingham. We left in Philadelphia only the shell of the Democratic Party."[76] According to Thurmond "the radicals, the subversives, and the reds [were] in complete control of Party machinery." Constitutional government was "like a voice in the wilderness. Once again, we were ridiculed, reviled, and scorned."[77]

On August 21, 1948, Thurmond charged that the administration was trying to cover up the extent to which pro-Communists and Communist members have infiltrated government. When Truman called the investigation a "red herring" he was, according to Thurmond, trying to modify the outrage of the public over the disclosure of such facts. He charged that Truman had held back the FBI and covered up some subversives because of partisan politics. The position of the SRD was that every effort should be made to purge the Communists from governmental positions, regardless of political consequences.

At times, Thurmond criticized southern leaders who refused to join the Dixiecrat movement. Charging that they pretended to oppose the President's program, then thinking of the loss of patronage, they did an about face and supported Truman. They betrayed the South and were

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[76] Ibid., September 10, 1948.

[77] Ibid., September 25, 1948.

"willing to barter away the rights of the South for a mess of political pottage."[78]

Occasionally Thurmond attacked all of the other Presidential aspirants. He accused Truman, Dewey, and Wallace of wanting to introduce in America a totalitarian state like that of Germany, Italy, and Russia. All three wished to destroy the American way of life and to nullify the Bill of Rights.[79] Thurmond predicted that historians would say of the election that three men supported the totalitarian state--while "only one stood for the kind of government that has made the United States the greatest nation on earth."[80] To the charge that the Dixiecrats were helping the Republicans, Thurmond answered that without the SRD, Dewey would carry nearly all of the South; thus this was merely a measure used by the administration to discredit the southern party.

In his speeches, Thurmond, who considered himself a devout Christian, often made statements in Biblical language:

> We of the Scuth have _bourne_ all things, _believed_ all things, _endured_ all things, suffered _long_ and _envied_ not: we have sought _not_ our own; we have not been _easily_ provoked; but our _service_, our _faith_, our _belief_, and our _sufferings_ have been to _no_ avail.[81]

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[78] _Ibid._, July 31, 1948.

[79] _Ibid._, September 20, 1948.

[80] _Ibid._, October 4, 1948.

[81] _Ibid._

On another occasion he said: "Today we must sail by the star of the Constitution, second in glory only to the Star of Bethlehem itself in protecting the rights of oppressed mankind."[82] This undoubtedly had appeal to many of a religious bent in the South, who like the slaveholders of an earlier period, failed to see any inconsistency between his racial and religious beliefs.

Thurmond outlined three specific objectives of the SRD: to oppose centralized government with power concentrated in Washington; to alert the citizens of the United States that the American way of life was being endangered by the politicians of both major parties in hopes of attracting minority bloc votes; and to restore the South to her former position of influence and power within national politics.[83]

Thurmond and the SRD virtually ignored the foreign policy as an issue. From the few comments made by the Dixiecrat chiefs it appears that they supported Truman's get-tough-with-Russia policy. Thurmond believed that continued American ownership of the atomic bomb was the instrumental factor in maintaining world peace.[84]

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[82] Ibid., September 23, 1948.

[83] Ibid., August 26, 1948.

[84] Ibid., October 19, 1948.

While Thurmond was busily campaigning, his Vice-President made speeches in several sites in the South emphasizing the same topics and adding little new to the SRD rhetoric.

CHAPTER VIII

ANALYSIS OF THE DIXIECRAT EFFORT

The results of the 1948 Presidential election astounded the nation. Truman, in the face of what seemed to be certain defeat received 24,179,345 popular votes or 49 per cent of the total, thus capturing 303 electoral votes; the Republicans received 21,991,291 popular votes, approximately 45.1 per cent and 189 electoral votes; the Progressives won 1,157,326 popular votes, 2.4 per cent but did not win any electoral votes; and the Dixiecrats won 1,176,125 popular votes or 2.4 per cent of all votes cast and 39 electoral votes.[1]

The Dixiecrats, while winning over one-fifth of the popular votes in the South, and receiving over 98.8 per cent of their total vote from the southern states, still insisted that they were not a regional but a national movement. They won one or more votes in nine non-southern states with their greatest degree of success out of these nine states in Kentucky where they received 1.3 per cent of the total. In general the Dixiecrats had

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[1]Heard, A Two Party South? pp. 25-26, 115-18.

limited their campaign to the southern states although former Louisiana Governor Sam Jones conducted a vigorous campaign on behalf of the Dixiecrats in North Dakota, a state which cast 374 votes for Thurmond.[2]

The Dixiecrats carried Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Louisiana, the states where Thurmond was listed under the Democratic label. In each state where he was listed on a separate ticket, he trailed both the Democrats and the Republicans. The election results pointed out that the Dixiecrat appeal was primarily to those who feared altering the status of the blacks. Whites who lived near large numbers of blacks, in black belt areas, were the sections which voted most heavily for the Dixiecrats. Alexander Heard, political scientist and co-worker of Vladimir Key on the topic of recent southern politics, found a positive correlation between the percentage of the Thurmond vote and the percentage of the black population. According to their analyses, "the intensity of southern feeling on the position of the Negro varies proportionately with the concentration of Negroes."[3] Where large black populations existed, race became the foremost issue. William Keefee, a political analyst, who views statistically the voting

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[2]Ibid.

[3]Key, Southern Politics, pp. 329-44; and Heard, A Two Party South? pp. 251-52.

behavior in the four Dixiecrat states in relation to the black-white ratio, confirmed Key's thesis that the Dixiecrats received their heaviest votes in the black belt areas of the South.[4] Assuming that some blacks in the rural southern black belt did vote, analysts safely attributed the majority of the votes to whites. On the other hand, where more blacks participated, Thurmond, because of this black vote, received a smaller percentage. An earlier but less extensive study made by Key also supported this conclusion as did a later study made by David M. Heer, senior student at Harvard. He analyzed Thurmond's vote in South Carolina, county by county and found that his support varied directly with the black population. Heer found a difference in attitudes toward race between the rural and urban populace in the South Carolina counties, a factor reflected in the votes for Thurmond.[5] But in general the rural-urban factor did not appear to be of significance except where the Negro population was also a factor. Urban and rural counties both were found among the strongholds as well as the weak spots of the Dixiecrat movement and as many prominent state Dixiecrat leaders came from the large cities as well as small towns.

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[4] Ibid.

[5] David M. Heer, "The Sentiment of White Supremacy: An Ecological Study," American Journal of Sociology, LXIV (May, 1959), 592-98.

Dixiecrat supporters, when analyzed, were found to be "southerners most firmly wed traditionally to the Democratic party."[6] They came from areas that in 1861 promoted secession and in 1928 remained loyal to Al Smith. To illustrate the correlation between the Dixiecrat strength and the black belt areas, Heard compiled the following chart.

	Estimated Percentage Black 1950	Percentage of vote for Thurmond 1948
Mississippi	45.5	87.2
South Carolina	38.9	72.0
Louisiana	33.1	49.1
Alabama	32.1	79.8
Georgia	30.9	20.3
North Carolina	26.6	8.8
Arkansas	22.4	16.5
Virginia	22.2	10.3
Florida	21.8	15.6
Tennessee	16.1	13.4
Texas	11.5	9.3 [7]

The Deep South, that is, the first five states listed, all have high proportions of blacks. Here as in the rest of the South the Dixiecrats sought to win the votes of the regular Democratic electors in a struggle that involved the New Deal and anti-New Deal or liberal-conservative factions of the party.[8]

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[6] Heard, A Two Party South? p. 252.

[7] Ibid., p. 253.

[8] Key, Southern Politics, p. 340.

Mississippi, the state with the largest number of blacks, gave Thurmond his highest percentage of votes.[9] Here, the Dixiecrats, in complete control of the voting machinery, had placed the names of Thurmond and Wright on the ballot as the Democratic nominees while the "loyal Democrats" were lucky to get Truman and Barkley on the ballot at all.[10]

The state with the second largest number of blacks, South Carolina was where the first sign of an open break with the national party occurred. In Jasper County, (64.1 per cent black), the Democratic committee in February had called a county convention to discuss the feasibility of a bolt. Later, this county along with several others agreed that South Carolina's electoral votes should be withheld unless Truman renounced his civil rights policies, a position which the upcountry counties opposed. As Heard noted, South Carolinians who remained loyal to the Democratic party were the poor farmers and mill workers, "red necks and lent heads" or the people of the uplands.[11]

Louisiana, unlike the other Deep South states that voted for Thurmond, was not always safely in the Dixiecrat camp. W. H. Talbot, the national committeeman and Governor Earl Long publicly supported Truman and openly stated

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[9]Heard, A Two Party South? p. 253.

[10]Key, Southern Politics, p. 340.

[11]Heard, A Two Party South? p. 275.

opposition to the bolt. Supporting the revolt, conservative state politicians such as former Governor Sam Jones and John U. Barr headed the drive for signatures to get the Dixiecrat candidates on the ballot, but made no effort to steal the Democratic electors. Then suddenly in March, Talbot turned Dixiecrat and by September the Democratic state executive committee during the absence of Long listed Thurmond and Wright as the official nominees of the Democratic party. At this point it appeared that Truman and Barkley would not even appear on the ballot. Not to be outdone in his own state, Long, a conservative but a loyal Democrat, called a special session of the legislature which voted to have Truman's name placed on the ballot but not under the rooster, the southern emblem of the Democratic party.[12]

Although the full story explaining the Louisiana coup is not known, Key mentions without elaborating that some hinted at a connection with tidelands oil. Key suggests that the senatorial primary of August 31, between Robert F. Kennon and Russell Long was a factor since Kennon sought to exploit Long's non-committal attitude toward civil rights in the upcoming election. Thurmond attributed the situation to differences in local politics there.[13]

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[12]Key, Southern Politics, p. 341.

[13]Ibid.

In Alabama where Truman's name did not even appear on the ballot, the Democratic electors had been committed by virtue of the primary to oppose Truman. Since no state law required the listing of the Democratic nominees, many old-time Democrats who might have voted for Truman otherwise, were forced to vote for Thurmond.[14] If the voters had had a choice of candidates, the outcome doubtlessly would have coincided with the popular votes for delegates to the Democratic national convention. Delegates who were pledged to walk out if Truman were nominated by the convention were supported by black belt areas, whereas delegates who favored remaining loyal to the party regardless of the candidates chosen were supported by voters outside the black belt areas.[15] As election time neared, Governor Folsom openly campaigned for the Democrats, but in vain.

In Georgia, politics were split into the conservative group led by Governor Talmadge and the anti-Talmadge group, or the loyal Democrats, led by former Governor M. E. Thompson. After Talmadge won the gubernatorial primary in September and control of the state committee, rumors spread of the Talmadgites' intention to see to it that Georgia's electors supported the Dixiecrats. The Atlanta Journal reported in September that James S. Peters, the

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[14] Ibid., p. 340.

[15] Heard, A Two Party South? p. 278.

state chairman, promised Gessner T. McCorvey, Alabama state chairman, that Georgia would unquestionably support the Dixiecrats. This statement was confirmed by the Alabama state chairman of the SRD. Although Talmadge himself avoided involvement in the bolt, many of the States' Rights electors were Talmadge men.

Yet ultimately the committee endorsed the Truman electors relegating the SRD candidates to a spot on the ballot outside the Democratic column. Key suggests that Talmadge feared a split in the Democratic ranks in Georgia over the presidential election would cause a stronger contest in the gubernatorial election and this he did not want.[16]

In Florida, Texas, and Arkansas there was no strong Republican party nor were there as many Negroes in these states as in the Deep South. Politicians in all three states remembered the 1928 bolt and feared similar reprisals should they follow the same pattern in 1948. The struggle in these states was a familiar one between the black belt conservatives and the liberal loyal Democrats.

Led by Frank D. Upchurch, a member of the state Democratic executive committee and a foe of Senator Pepper, conservatives from Florida began toying with the notion of a bolt. As early as February, Upchurch proposed that Florida work in conjunction with other southern states for the defeat of Harry Truman. As the year progressed various

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[16]Key, Southern Politics, pp. 341-42.

segments of the state condemned Truman's civil rights program while the Democratic executive committees from several counties passed resolutions stating their objections to Truman.

As the primary campaign for convention delegates and electors got underway in Florida the battle lines were clearly drawn: one group proposed bolting if Truman or a similar liberal candidate were nominated for President while the other group opposed both Truman and a bolt. Out of a delegation of twenty, Upchurch and States' Rights sympathizers won eleven and a half votes which under the unit rule gave them control of the delegation. Four of Florida's eight presidential electors promised to vote against the Democratic nominee in November, but control of the state Democratic executive committee was retained by Senator Pepper and the liberals. The voter, however, was given a clear choice through a special legislative session which provided for the listing of the names of the presidential candidates on the ballot without party designations. The increasing strength of the Republican party in Florida ultimately aided the liberals in holding the state for Truman. Following the familiar pattern, the votes that the Dixiecrats received came from regions primarily in North Florida, with the heaviest concentration of blacks.[17]

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[17] Ibid.

In Texas the Dixiecrats only slightly, if at all, recruited votes from the Republican ranks. Instead they relied on black belt areas which were traditional Democratic strongholds. An earlier bolt in the state by the Texas Regular movement in 1944 was created primarily to protest New Deal economic policies, but it found its support concentrated not in black belt areas but in the ranks of the former Republicans. If in 1944 some Democrats were on the verge of splitting from the party over economic philosophies, this appeared not to be the case in Texas by 1948; instead, the Dixiecrats "constituted a throwback, a revolt in reverse, among race-conscious whites."[18]

Nonetheless, many former Texas Regulars spearheaded the Dixiecrat movement in the state in 1948. The struggle at the May convention between liberals and conservatives ended with neither faction winning. The Texas Regulars failed to win adoption of a plan in which delegates would walk out of the national convention if the two-thirds rule were not restored. Likewise, liberals fighting for delegates pledged to Truman also failed. Governor Jester, who opposed the bolt, controlled the convention with the aid of labor and other liberals who had earlier opposed his election as governor.[19]

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[18]Heard, A Two Party South? p. 261.

[19]Key, Southern Politics, p. 339.

In Texas when the Negro population of 1950 was compared with the Thurmond vote, Dixiecratic strength was found to be strongest in the black belt areas; conversely, areas with the lowest numbers of blacks were areas where Thurmond gained a relatively low percentage of votes. Generally speaking, then, Thurmond won his greatest votes in the counties of East Texas while his support from West Texas counties was minimal.[20]

In Arkansas, Dixiecrat leaders came from the delta planter corporation faction of the Democratic party. With headquarters in Marianna in Lee County, over 50 per cent black, the original leaders were members of the Free Enterprise Association which consisted of plantation operators and Little Rock corporation executives with their lawyers. This association, which sponsored a right to work amendment to the state constitution, had long opposed the New Deal on economic grounds. "Business Ben" Laney, a member of this association, was the state chairman of the Dixiecrats while John L. Daggett, business leader, acted as executive secretary. Their opposition, the liberals in Arkansas, included Carl Bailey, former Progressive governor; Sid McMath, who handily won the gubernatorial nomination; and Senator William Fullbright, a devout advocate of party loyalty possibly because he feared Governor Laney's opposition in 1950.

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[20]Heard, A Two Party South? pp. 254-55.

In the end, however, the Free Enterprise Association lacked the necessary votes to swing Arkansas' electoral count for the Dixiecrats. Conservatives were defeated by the threat of Republicanism, the growing liberalism, and traditional Democratic regularity of the state.[21] Thurmond garnered most of his votes from the eastern and southern counties in Arkansas where the blacks were most heavily concentrated. More than one-fourth of the Dixiecrat votes came from fifteen counties in which blacks made up more than one-fourth of the population. While the Republican vote remained steady or increased in most southern states between 1944 and 1948, in Arkansas it dropped from 29.8 per cent to 21.0 per cent, giving possible substance to the charge that the Dixiecrats won some Republicans to their ranks.[22]

In states where the basis of the two-party system was more firmly established, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia, voters were heavily influenced by the Republican threat. Tennessee, which had voted for a Republican President twice between 1920 and 1948 further strengthened the contention that areas with large numbers of blacks were the areas in which Thurmond received his strongest support. For Tennessee this meant the southwestern corner of the state, the Memphis area, where politics were long dominated

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[21]Key, Southern Politics, pp. 338-39.

[22]Heard, A Two Party South? p. 262.

by Democratic boss, Crump, leader of the conservative faction, who had openly supported Thurmond in the presidential race. Although his own men were defeated in the primary in 1948, Heard believed that he was still a factor in aiding the Dixiecrats in that area.[23] In the gubernatorial and senatorial primaries the Crump men lost to the liberals led by Estes Kefauver. The liberals, once in control of the party machinery, sent an uninstructed delegation to Philadelphia. Although they were not overjoyed with the civil rights program, they supported most of the other administration policies. When Senator McKellar, a conservative, announced support for Truman, it was clear that the strong Republican threat was forcing even the opponents away from the Dixiecrats because they feared losing the election.[24]

In North Carolina, however, the southern state in which the Thurmond appeal was weakest, he was especially weak in the black belt, a traditionally liberal Democratic area while he was strongest in the largely white counties. As early as May, North Carolina, announcing support of Truman, urged all Democrats to join forces in order to defeat the rising Republican threat. When at the state convention the delegation from Granville County (51 per cent black) proposed instructing delegates to vote against

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[23] Ibid., pp. 263-64.

[24] Key, Southern Politics, p. 337.

Truman or any other civil rights advocate, they were immediately put down.

Leading Dixiecrats in this state, David Clark and Philip S. Finn, Jr., were described as the same group who supported Dewey in 1944 and Wilkie in 1940. Opposition to Truman in North Carolina was due to their dislike for his economic policies, rather than his civil rights program. Thus, sharing the convictions of the Texas Regulars, it appeared that conservative North Carolinians would have opposed Truman regardless of the civil rights issue, but this opposition would not have taken the form of a bolt. Furthermore, the black belt of North Carolina contained more poor whites than did the black belts of other southern states, and so race consciousness was replaced by the economic liberalism of this large voting class. But there is little evidence to support the contention that the Dixiecrats received more votes from the Republicans than from the Democrats.[25]

Although the Republican threat was not as strong in Virginia as in North Carolina it was a factor of such grave concern that it silenced the conservative support of the Dixiecrats. Two factions dominated in Virginia: Martin Hutchinson led the liberal wing of the Democratic party while Senator Harry Byrd and Governor William Tuck led the conservative faction. In February Governor Tuck

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[25]Heard, A Two Party South? pp. 269-73.

and Senator Byrd sponsored a plan whereby the state party convention or a designated committee could decide after the Democratic convention which candidate the state electors would be instructed to vote for. But liberals in the legislature led by Representative John W. Flannagan and Martin Hutchinson, liberal leader in the legislature refusing to acquiese to the Byrd machine, forced Tuck and Byrd to accept a watered down version of their bill. Although Governor Tuck and Byrd made no comment concerning their presidential preferences following the national convention, earlier comments indicated that their sympathies lay with the Dixiecrats. Meanwhile the Democratic state central committee declared its neutrality in the presidential election, thus there was no assertive Democratic party leadership available. They did encourage the public, however, to vote Democratic for other offices.[26] Here again, Thurmond won most of his votes from counties containing the largest number of blacks. There were no conclusive results in the 1948 election to prove that the cities voted Democratic and the rural areas voted Dixiecratic; rather, as in other states, the concentration of blacks was the decisive factor.[27]

From the foregoing analysis it can be seen that even in the Deep South sentiment for the Dixiecrat bolt was not

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[26]Key, Southern Politics, p. 336.

[27]Heard, A Two Party South, pp. 265-68.

universal. To many voters, traditional Democratic loyalty, fear of Republican victory, and a favorable inclination for the overall economic policies of the Democrats was more important than the civil rights issue. It is very likely that Truman won in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina simply because he was named the Democratic nominee in those states.[28]

The one dominant and constant factor emerging from this analysis of the Dixiecrat vote is that the Dixiecrats derived the bulk of their support from whites who lived in close proximity to large numbers of blacks. Fearful that the major parties would upset the status quo with regard to social and economic patterns, these people cast their votes for the Dixiecrat party. While economic policies were a source of discontent to many former Democrats, without the issue of civil rights their dissatisfaction would have smoldered unnoticed.

In general the liberals in each state supported Truman, but on occasion conservatives whose fear of Republicans exceeded their ideological incompatibility with the Democrats supported the Democrats. Southern voters in 1948 appeared to vote just the opposite of the way they voted in 1928; the white counties were most loyal to the Democrats while the whites in heavily black counties voted for Thurmond. Where variations occurred, traditional party

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[28]Key, Southern Politics, p. 342.

loyalties cemented by Democratic-Republican competition explained the deviation.[29]

Since the Dixiecrat support came from the southern black belts, regions where blacks constitute from 40 to 80 per cent of the population, it should be noted that these southerners, though a minority, historically have set the tone of southern politics. These whites living in close proximity to large numbers of blacks have been the ones most concerned with white supremacy; consequently, the politics of a particular region of the South has varied according to the number of blacks living there. Despite the small area of the black belt settlements, the whites of these regions have managed to wield political influence disproportionate to their number. A source of interest then to the student of southern politics is to determine what sort of people lived in the black belts that supported Thurmond. From a survey of recorded observations it appears that the Dixiecrat supporters were a motley group who defy rigid classification. Ralph McGill, a southern journalist, observed that the Dixiecrat party was "the most infamously hypocritical and intellectually dishonest political organization ever created."[30] Seeing the movement as a cover up for special

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[29] Ibid., pp. 352-53.

[30] Ralph McGill, The South and the Southerner (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1963), p. 187.

interest groups, McGill consistently denounced the movement.

The description of the Dixiecrats as "plantation-minded Southerners and political 'Outs' who were exploiting the racial issue," make it almost plausible for one to subscribe to a "displaced elite" thesis to explain the membership of this party. They were not all, however, elite; many, indeed, were far from it. As Fuller suggests, the best people along with the least desirable types frequented Dixiecrat meetings; thus, it was not unusual to find leading citizens and outcasts together filling the ranks of the party. Headquarters for the rebels could be found in the best hotels in every sizeable southern town.[31]

One source claimed that the Dixiecrats consisted of "a Southern upper crust of mill owners, oil men, tobacco growers, bankers and lawyers, voting Republican."[32] Sometimes the representatives of northern corporations who lived in the South were the leaders in the movement. Fuller pointed out that Palmer Bradley, Houston lawyer and the puppet of Standard Oil of New Jersey, Roy Cullen, Dallas attorney and Republican oil man, Fessner McCorvey of Mobile, Alabama and lawyer for Standard Oil and other

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[31]Fuller, "The New Confederacy," pp. 12-13.

[32]"Third Parties: Southern Revolt," Time, October 11, 1948, pp. 23-27.

leaders in the movement were closely associated with big industries.[33]

Political scientist, William Carleton, on the other hand, found that the party consisted of "the poor white elements--crackers, Hill-billies, and rednecks . . . and the piney wood folk and those who resent the rise of the Negro as reflecting on their own relative place in society."[34] With their reactionary racial and religious prejudices, they tried to retain the status quo that was under attack by a strong federal government determined to ensure civil rights to all citizens. And as J. T. Graves, southern journalist, described the array of Dixiecrat supporters:

> . . . it was a grass roots revolt. . . . There were scoundrels in it; also fools. There were schemers, professionals, political hacks and has-beens, reactionaries antedating Mark Hanna in point of view; Ku Kluxers, Negro baiters--and haters, Confederate-flag-waving-Dixie-singing-sentimentalist, wife-beaters, dog poisoners, eaters of popcorn in the movies, and many who wear wool hats in the summer (a crime high in the categories of Time and Life). There were men who believed that the states rather than the federal government should have tidewater oil rights, a belief somehow deemed sinister although the great American oil steal at Teapot Dome was from the federal, not a state government.
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> There were Republicans in the movement, too, although hell trembled at the hideous name.[35]

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[33]Fuller, "The New Confederacy," pp. 12-13.

[34]Ader, Dixiecrat Movement, p. 5.

[35]John Temple Graves, "Revolution in the South," Virginia Quarterly Review, XXVI (Spring, 1950), 190-203.

While Dixiecrat strength came from a cross-section of the country, most authorities agreed that the party itself was not representative of the South as a whole. Although southerners in general disliked Truman's civil rights program, they saw little to be gained by supporting a single issue party like the Dixiecrats who were led by minor professional politicians advocating an outdated issue which most people could not buy.[36]

Unfortunately the party was not always able to choose its following. Just as the Communists supported Wallace so the extreme right supported the Dixiecrats. The party, after all, represented some of the same beliefs that the reactionaries held, beliefs which even the leaders encouraged their supporters to soft pedal. Thurmond frequently cautioned his followers to avoid making references that would make them "vulnerable to charges of racial intolerance and bigotry."[37] It was difficult, if not impossible, for the Dixiecrats to keep these reactionary elements from attending and participating in their rallies. At one point in his campaign Thurmond openly repudiated the support of avowed racists, saying "we do not invite, and we do not need, the support of Gerald K. Smith or any other rabble-rousers who use race prejudice and class hatred to inflame the emotions of our people."[38]

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[36]"Danger from the Dixiecrats," New Republic, CXIX (August 2, 1948), 119.

[37]Memorandums, Gibson Papers.

[38]Ibid.

After the Birmingham meeting, when the press questioned Thurmond about Smith's presence, he claimed he did not know that Smith was there, that he had never met Smith, and that Smith had no part in the conference. In his statement Thurmond exclaimed that "the Southern fight is not a race fight but an effort to protect the principle of States' Rights."[39] According to Thurmond, the opposition was working "to smear our efforts with the false trappings of race hatreds."[40] The party's interest, he said, was not in racial matters primarily but in protecting the rights of states to control their internal affairs. What Thurmond really believed cannot be proven but he was shrewd enough to recognize that it was a political necessity for him to denounce the support of the "political skum" such as Smith, who could do nothing but discredit the Dixiecrat movement.

Some of Thurmond's supporters, however, took issue with his condemnation of Smith. Such a man was George Armstrong, chairman of the board of the Texas Steel Company in Fort Worth, who wrote to Thurmond that he was sorry to know that Thurmond was "not conscious of the race problem that threatens the peace of our country, and I am also sorry that I cannot support you." How many other similar

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[39]Statement, J. Strom Thurmond, August 7, 1948, Thurmond Papers, States' Rights File.

[40]Ibid.

supporters Thurmond had and lost due to his repudiation of Smith is unknown; yet, it is doubtful that these people voted for any candidate other than Thurmond.[41]

Since the membership in the Ku Klux Klan is not easily obtainable, there is no way of accurately determining how its members voted in 1948. However, the Dixiecrat party's ideology, without question, was closer to the beliefs of the Klan than were the programs of the other parties. According to Leslie Velie, a journalist, the SRD's, in so many words, may not have encouraged increased Klan activity, but they did give the Klan a party to rally around. Since it was Harry Truman's civil rights message that bolstered the membership in and increased the activities of the Klan, it could be safely assumed that Klansmen voted the Dixiecrat ticket in 1948.[42] Attorney General Albert Carmichael of Alabama denounced the SRD in an address to the Methodist Committee on Social Action, claiming that the southern bolt was caused by a few extremely selfish people "whose sole political, economic and personal interest is that of bringing about a national regime favorable to the clients they represent." He also tied the Ku Klux Klan to the Dixiecrats claiming that the States' Righters included "a small bunch of thugs, bums

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[41]Letter, George Armstrong to Strom Thurmond, July 22, 1948, Laney Papers, States Rights Committee File.

[42]Lester Velie, "The Klan Rides the South Again," Collier's, October 9, 1948, pp. 13-14.

and hoodlums, covered by sheets," who carried out the orders of the leaders of the Dixiecrat party.[43] States' Righters consistently denied connection with the Klan. Dixon, for example, repeatedly stated that his personal record was clear. "For every one against whom the charge of bigotry might lie, there are a thousand against whom our most reckless enemies could not establish such a charge."[44] As long as the racial issue lay at the heart of the States' Rights movement, however, there was as little chance for its members to avoid the charge of racial bigotry as there was the possibility of eliminating extreme right wing support of their party.

The Dixiecrat leaders, Thurmond and Wright, were symbolic of the old basis of southern solidarity that was declining. Both were governors of the two southern states containing the highest proportion of blacks--they were spokesmen of the black belt. Heard saw Dixiecrat leaders as planters, financiers, and industrialists--people who disagreed with the Democratic party, not on civil rights only, but those who disagreed on "labor legislation, economic controls, taxation, Federal jurisdiction, and many other domestic issues."[45] According to Heard, they found

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Letter, Frank Dixon to Editor of Richmond Times Dispatch, August 14, 1948, Dixon Papers, States Rights Correspondence File.

[45] Heard, A Two Party South? p. 247.

a means of protest in the uproar over civil rights. While this was undoubtedly true, the above mentioned areas of disagreement were relegated completely to the central issue of civil rights. Although information on most of the active Dixiecrat leaders is lacking or so incomplete as to be misleading, it appears from available sources that the majority of the leaders had nothing but contempt for any and all civil rights programs.

Following the analysis of the Dixiecrat vote and the Dixiecrat voter an evaluation of the movement itself is in order. Clearly enough the Dixiecrat candidates did not win the election of 1948 nor did they succeed in harnessing enough votes to throw the election into the House of Representatives. As far as the Democrats and the rest of the public were concerned, then, the Dixiecrat movement was a failure. The States' Rights leaders, however, disagreed, stating among other things that their cause had strengthened "constitutionalism" in the United States. To dispense with shadowy claims of success or failure, the movement can be more accurately measured by comparing its objectives with its concrete accomplishments. Considered in this light the States' Rights movement was "one of the most conspicuous failures in American political history."[46] One of the major objectives of the Dixiecrats,

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[46]Harry S. Ashmore, "The South's Year of Decision," The Southern Packet: A Monthly Review of Southern Books and Ideas, IV (November, 1948), 2.

to defeat the civil rights program of the Democratic party, was not realized. By relaying to the South their interpretation of the implications of civil rights legislation they alarmed many southerners, but not enough to frighten the majority of them from the Democratic party. What the Dixiecrats actually accomplished by their action was to call attention to the plight of the Negro in the South; instead of arresting the progress of the blacks, they may have advanced it. It is true that southern Democrats aided by conservative Republicans managed later to delay civil rights legislation, but only temporarily.

Failing in their advocacy of state ownership of the tidelands, the Dixiecrats fell short of the larger related goal--that of restoring more power to the states by removing it from the federal government. The Dixiecrat attempt to channel the trend of government toward conservatism was in vain because under Truman gains of the New Deal were extended and solidified.

The stated objectives of the Dixiecrats as related to the Democratic convention also were aborted. They had advocated the re-instatement of the two-thirds rule, a strong states' rights plank, and the complete omission of civil rights. They failed on all three counts. Since the Dixiecrats failed to realize any of their major goals, the movement must be classified as a failure, and the reasons for this are worth noting.

Emile Ader, political scientist, explained that the Dixiecrat failure was due primarily to their inability to get support in their home territory. Tradition and heritage accounted for the refusal of many southerners to vote for the Dixiecrats. Persisting still in the South was the belief that all southerners must vote for "papa's party," that is, the Democratic party, regardless of the principles it espoused or the men it sponsored.[47] Apparently the Democratic tradition in the South was too strong to be broken suddenly even over an issue as explosive as civil rights.[48]

Party discipline and fear of losing patronage caused many influential figures to stay with the Democrats even though their personal beliefs may have been closer to those of the Dixiecrats. Since the Democratic party offered certain advantages to the loyal such as appointments to federal jobs, even white supremacy men like Herman Talmadge of Georgia could not afford to lose their connections with the Democratic party.[49] On the other hand, some supported the Dixiecrats because they believed Harry Truman would be beaten, thus, they would have nothing to lose by bolting the party.[50] It is possible also that some southern

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[47]Ader, Dixiecrat Movement, p. 360.

[48]Kirkendall, "Presidential Politics," p. 424.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Statement, Gessner T. McCorvey, n.d., Montgomery,

leaders who voted the Dixiecrat ticket made no public display to that effect. They, therefore, failed to convince others to vote the Dixiecrat ticket, thereby weakening the movement. Since the South failed to stick together solidly enough to make their effort effective, party loyalty undermined the movement throughout the campaign.[51]

A continually growing southern liberalism perhaps prevented many southerners from being hoodwinked into following a racist-ridden party. The South was changing, economically and politically, and even southerners who felt that these changes were too rapid realized that to support the Dixiecrats would amount to social and political regression. In short, racism was losing its respectability in the South as evidenced by the fact that many southerners could not classify themselves with such people as Gerald K. Smith and others of his type. Fortunately, the Dixiecrats did not represent all of the South, but rather "a minority segment within a minority regional group."[52]

Many distrusted the aims and motives of the Dixiecrats, thinking, perhaps that they were the tools of the

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Alabama, State Department of Archives and History, Chauncey Sparks Papers, Democratic National Convention of 1948 File.

[51]Letter, Frank Dixon to John Sheffield, December 29, 1948, Dixon Papers, States Rights Correspondence 1948 File.

[52]Hodding Carter, "A Southern Liberal Looks at Civil Rights," New York Times Magazine, August 8, 1948, pp. 10, 20-25.

Republicans. Also Truman's argument that a vote for any party other than the Democrats was a vote for the Republicans, fell on sympathetic ears in the South. Perhaps others saw the leaders of the Dixiecrats as political opportunists greedy for fame and power at the expense of the public. They might have felt that these men really did not care about settling the race issue but preferred to keep it alive, thereby exploiting it for their own selfish political purposes.[53] Many were convinced that the party was a pawn of special interest groups and big business and was thus unconcerned with the South as a whole.[54]

Internal dissension was another contributing factor in the decline of the Dixiecrats. Lack of agreement on specific aims and on means of implementing these aims led to poor coordination of the whole movement. The public, for example, never was informed clearly Dixiecrat objectives and strategy nor were they properly informed of current Dixiecrat rallies and meetings. This was due, partially, to the fact that the leading southern journals either ridiculed or condemned the movement, leaving only a few minor papers to publicize the Dixiecrat cause. Had the bolters been able to convince the southern press to support them, their campaign might have been advanced

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[53]Ader, Dixiecrat Movement, p. 360.

[54]Kirkendall, "Presidential Politics," p. 424.

considerably. Even when the Dixiecrats managed to get press coverage, however, the conflicting reports that were issued made it difficult for the public to know exactly what was going on.

The pettiness and jealousy that existed among the leaders of the movement added to the confusion. Thurmond and Laney provided a striking example of this in that both wanted to run the party according to their own personal tastes. Leaders disagreed on enumerable topics ranging from the number of party buttons to be distributed in a particular area to disputes concerning the time and place for speaking engagements. They also could not agree on when and where a convention should be held and ultimately resorted to having two conventions instead of one. Since the Dixiecrats numbered few professional politicians, many amateur or would-be-politicians assumed positions that required experience and know-how. This absence of political knowledge was evident throughout the life of the Dixiecrat movement.

That the Dixiecrats were poorly organized may be at least partially explained by the hurried manner in which they built their campaign machinery. The party was not created formally until after the Birmingham Conference, leaving its mentors little more than three months in which to build an organization capable of attracting

significant numbers to their cause.[55] As E. H. Ramsey, Dixiecrat leader in Florida, observed, the chief weakness of the movement was that "we were trying to do a job in a matter of months that would have required a minimum of four years."[56] The odds against the Dixiecrats were overwhelming. Third parties in the United States have traditionally succeeded in doing little more than exposing issues and voicing protests, their success has not been in winning elections. The fact that the Dixiecrat party was essentially a negative party damaged it from the beginning. It was widely known that the Dixiecrats were against civil rights for blacks, against centralized government and against Truman in general, but the dissidents never made clear what they were for. Had they stood for some definite and positive goals they might have appeared more convincing to the public.

Insufficient financial support was another paramount reason for the lack of success of the Dixiecrats. Without money the party was unable to advertise properly, unable to hire capable personnel in their various offices, and in general unable to conduct the vigorous campaign required of any minor party movement. If big oil men had contributed as freely as it was charged, perhaps the

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[55]Letter, Ben Laney to Seton Ross, November 8, 1948, Laney Papers, Dixiecrat File.

[56]Letter, E. H. Ramsey to Ben Laney, Laney Papers, Dixiecrat File.

Dixiecrats would have been less restricted in their efforts. Although Laney and other leaders donated generously to the cause, it was not nearly the amount required for such a project. Inefficiency and mismanagement may have existed to a degree, but the central problem was the inadequate treasury.

Perhaps Harry Truman's handling of the southern problem, that is, ostensibly ignoring it, caused its importance to diminish in the eyes of southerners and northerners alike. Had Truman reacted violently against the Dixiecrats and resorted to name calling and wild accusations, some who otherwise would not have considered supporting the southern bolters might have been drawn to them. But Truman, in an uncharacteristic display of polite politics, met the challenge shrewdly.

Thus measured against their stated objectives the Dixiecrats fell far short of success. Setting out to save the United States from "totalitarianism and a police state" they caused little more than a ripple upon the overall immediate political scene. However, their long range effects seem to be considerably more impressive.

CHAPTER IX

THE DIXIECRATS AFTER 1948

Although relations between Truman and Thurmond had never been cordial, following the 1948 election their relationship seemed even more strained. Upon learning of Truman's victory, Thurmond sent him a telegram assuring him of his cooperation "in every constitutional endeavor looking toward the progress of our people and a lasting peace."[1] The word "constitutional" carried with it connotations that Truman understood well, because throughout the campaign, Thurmond had attacked Truman's programs as unconstitutional.

During Truman's inauguration parade when Thurmond and his wife passed in front of the Presidential reviewing stand, Thurmond raised his hat in a gesture of friendliness. Truman not only refused to return the greeting, smile, or even doff his hat, but when Vice-President Barkley attempted to wave to Thurmond Truman forcibly restrained him from doing so. Through these gestures Truman

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[1]Statement, J. Strom Thurmond, November 3, 1948, Thurmond Papers, States Rights File.

finally publicly displayed his attitude toward the Dixiecrats. Immediately following the parade, Thurmond, who considered this action an insult to his wife, left Washington and thus for the moment severed himself completely from the Administration.[2]

Shortly after the inauguration, rumors spread concerning disciplinary measures to be taken against disloyal Democrats. Senator McGrath announced early in the year that few purges of the disloyal would occur, except perhaps with regard to the leaders of the Dixiecrat party. The Democratic credentials committee voted to refuse admission to the following Dixiecrats: Marion Rushton from Alabama; William Talbot from Louisiana; J. B. Snyder and Mrs. Hermes Gautier of Mississippi; and Strom Thurmond, who actually had already resigned from the committee; and Mrs. Albert Agnew of South Carolina.[3]

Truman later delivered a speech in which he asked the former Dixiecrat supporters to rejoin the party on his terms--that was to accept the 1948 Democratic platform. Many leading Dixiecrats agreed with Gessner T. McCorvey who said that since he had never belonged to Truman's Democratic party he did not intend to join now. McCorvey stated that he would remain a member of Alabama's Democratic

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[2]Washington Times-Herald, June 17, 1950.

[3]"Democratic Committee asked to Oust Dixiecrat State Committeemen," Rushton Papers, Correspondence 1949 File.

party, which, unlike the national Democratic party, still espoused traditional Democratic principles.[4] The Administration also encouraged the loyal Democrats in the various states to regain control over the Democratic machinery in their state. The national committee, however, announcing that it had no intention of interfering in struggles within the state, wanted the outcome of these intra-party battles decided by the up-coming primaries and conventions at which delegates and electors would be chosen.[5]

Party bolters throughout United States political history have received either very lenient punishment, or no punishment at all. When discipline was necessary it usually consisted of being deprived of committee assignments, of seniority, or of exclusion from the caucus. Most southern officials, even if they favored the bolt, had been careful not to publicize their position. Few Congressmen campaigned openly for the Dixiecrats, and Eastland of Mississippi was the only Senator who stumped for Thurmond.[6]

Some loyal Democrats had strong feelings against the southern dissidents and thought they should be purged from positions of importance. Eleanor Roosevelt, United

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Heard, A Two Party South? pp. 24-25.

[6] Ibid.

States representative to the United Nations, requested the permanent removal from the party of all important Dixiecrats but her proposal was ignored by the Dixiecrats as well as by the Democrats.[7] McGrath urged Democratic members of Congress to decide on awarding the chairmanships in the new Congress so that the national committee would not have to engage in any such struggle. McGrath's plan was to reward the loyal Democrats without executing reprisals against the disloyal, for he knew that a wholesale system of reprisals would only hinder their attempt to solidify Democratic support of Truman's legislative proposals.[8] If southerners were denied chairmanships of committees that were due them under the seniority rule, it would jeopardize the Democratic majority in the Senate and would hurt their margin in the House as well.

McGrath explained that the national committee could not remove party officers in the South even if it wanted to. Members of the national committee were nominated by the members of the party by their various states and then elected to a four-year term by the party's national convention making them members of the national committee until they resigned or were removed.[9] On the other side, McGrath worked diligently to persuade Wallace

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[7] "New Commentator," Time, November 26, 1948, p. 46.

[8] Providence Bulletin, November 9, 1948.

[9] Washington Post, January 17, 1949.

supporters to return to the Democratic party. Senator Glen Taylor of Idaho, for example, was allowed to keep his seniority and committee standing as before.[10]

In spite of all the talk of purge, which the press played up, the disloyal Democrats were given assignments along with the regular Democrats. Actually, the only real weapon to wield against disloyal members of the party was the withholding of patronage. But since some southern members of the Senate were responsible for confirming the appointments of postmasters and judges, the administration would have to be careful not to irritate the South unduly. For example, Senator Eastland was a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee which had control over judgeships, attorney, and marshal appointments. Senator Walter F. George of Georgia, another SRD supporter, was chairman of the Senate finance committee and in charge of appointing revenue and customs collectors.[11] Democratic leaders announced that patronage posts in the future would be tokens of party loyalty measured by the performance of Congressmen in their home districts and not based upon the way they voted in Congress. However, on the following day Truman, at his press conference, said that patronage would be distributed on voting performance in Washington.[12] In an effort to mold a more responsive Congress, Truman had

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[10] Ibid., May 9, 1949. [11] Ibid.

[12] Providence Journal, January 17, 1949.

used poor judgment in this statement since he desperately needed votes, including those of southern Democrats.

The relative leniency of the Democrats, however, did not end the Dixiecrat movement. Although the Dixiecrats were disappointed at their showing in the election, they had no intention of giving up the fight or of admitting defeat; as Thurmond told his supporters, his party had made "a definite contribution to constitutional government in America."[13] His implication was that the cause of "constitutional" government was still very much alive.

Following the election, the southern governors met in Savannah where they stated their intention to continue opposition to Truman's civil rights bills and the increased centralization of government.[14] States' rights was the underlying issue around which the conference was structured. Resolutions were passed condemning the proposed federalization of the National Guard, requesting state control of the tidelands, and promising "equal" educational opportunities for all on a segregated basis. In a summary resolution, the governors demonstrated that their rebellious spirit had not been dampened by the Truman election victory.[15]

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[13]Statement, J. Strom Thurmond, Thurmond Papers, States Rights File.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Statement, W. W. Chaplin, Thurmond Papers, Correspondence In File.

On February 7, the SRD established a national bureau to defend the rights of the states. At an executive meeting in Birmingham, with Governor Laney presiding, the bureau was instructed to establish offices in Washington, to publicize all federal proposals aimed at limiting local self-government, and to fight all unconstitutional limitations on the rights of states. By the terms of the resolution adopted, the bureau was declared not to be a political organization, nor was its purpose to start a new political party but rather it was to preserve the constitutional principles upon which the Democratic party was founded. After naming the organization the National States Rights Committee, the committee sent out invitations to states not previously represented and requested that each send two representatives to join their league. The committee then established a States Rights Institute for educational purposes with a newsletter to circulate their information to the nation.[16]

Leander Perez, political boss of Louisiana, was named head of the Washington office and was given the task of coordinating efforts in the various states to elect conservative governors, senators, and congressmen, and to keep the state committees informed on the political activities in Washington. The function of the office, Perez explained, was to warn the public of the dangers to

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[16] New York Times, February 7, 1949.

constitutional government resulting from the votes of congressmen. Feeling that these "liberal" representatives were betraying long-standing American principles such as local self-rule, free enterprise, and individualism, Perez and his associates believed if the people were aware of this continual erosion of democracy, they would act to stop it. The SRD would perform its duty to the nation by saving the country from Communism and totalitarianism. Laney characterized the Washington information center as an office for the "spying on the Federal government," while he referred to Perez as the "watch dog."[17]

The next Dixiecrat meeting of significance was held in Dothan, Alabama, in April, 1949. Some 500 Dixiecrats from Alabama and nearby states met to honor congressmen who had opposed Truman's civil rights program and to hear the Dixiecrat journalist John Temple Graves speak. Suggesting that the Dixiecrats work with the Republicans in the future, he suggested a coalition of southern Democrats and conservative Republicans who could oppose the civil rights and labor program of the Democrats. The mere hint of such action, however, upset some Dixiecrats. But in spite of this, the majority declared their willingness to work with any national party or group

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[17]Ben Laney, Private Interview, Magnolia, Arkansas, April, 1970.

that protected the rights of the states and constitutional government: "Principle is above any party. We invite all Americans to work with us."[18]

On the second anniversary of the founding of the SRD, May 10, 1949, some 325 Dixiecrats from nine states met to discuss the future of their party. They adopted a "Constitution and Declaration of Principles" and formally established the National States' Rights Committee. Ben Laney was selected as chairman, while Leander Perez and Wallace W. Wright were chosen as vice-chairmen. All three emphasized that the party was a national and not a regional one.[19] The three-hour meeting was keynoted by Laney, who stressed the dangers of a growing centralized government and the diminishing role of the states. In a proposed amendment to the Constitution which curtailed the powers of the federal government and advocated that Congress should not be allowed to make any law conflicting with state laws in areas of education, elections, civil rights, race, labor, zoning, and the transfer of property; they asked that there be some assurance that neither labor, business, or industry would be nationalized. They requested that any kind of aid from the federal government be administered by the states and finally in dealing with

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[18] New York Times, April 9, 1949.

[19] "Report of the Jackson Meeting: National States' Rights Committee," May 10, 1949, Dixon Papers.

economic issues they called for an end to deficit spending except in times of war.[20] Their committee like their amendment received virtually no support from the public.

Nationwide a series of States' Righters suffered defeat in the southern states in the election of 1948. Governor Ben Laney of Arkansas was defeated by his opponent Sid McMath, while Dixiecrats in Alabama lost their majority on the Democratic state committee to supporters of loyalist Senators John Sparkman and Lister Hill. Thurmond was defeated by Senator Olin Johnston, who had expressed Dixiecrat sympathies but had refused to bolt the party. Senator Russell Long, foe of Leander Perez, the national director of the Dixiecrats, won in Louisiana; and in Georgia, Governor Talmadge, who also refused to support the Dixiecrats, was re-elected. Again in Florida and in North Carolina the victors denied formal connections with the Dixiecrats.[21] Fielding Wright who had been practicing law since the end of his term in 1952 was defeated in the gubernatorial primary race in 1955 and in May of the next year succumbed to a heart attack. Thurmond, however, was elected to the Senate in 1954 and in 1960.[22] In spite of these setbacks the southern Democratic-Republican conservative coalition effectively

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Heard, A Two Party South? p. 164.

[22] Lachicotte, Rebel Senator, pp. 229-55.

blocked much of Truman's legislative program. While many Dixiecrats clung to their beliefs, the party as a viable political organization virtually ceased; only in a technical sense did the Dixiecrat party continue to exist. They held meetings periodically and adopted resolution after resolution condemning the Administration. Yet, the party itself, as it had existed prior to the election, was defunct.

From the time that the public learned of the November election results, this election began to assume a unique position in American history. This contest, characterized not only by its unpredictable outcome but also by its array of unorthodox candidates and campaigns was also filled with contradictions, ironies, and paradoxes that would make it one of the most memorable to the voting public. Future underdog candidates would point to this election as proof that the polls could be misleading. The most obvious and frequently repeated question of the day was how Truman won. Historians who have done the most recent research on the question conclude that the basic explanation for Truman's victory was that he won votes from the old Roosevelt coalition. However, Truman did not carry the same areas that Roosevelt had won: Truman lost New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Michigan, and four states in the former Solid South. Prior to the election, the existence of third parties was interpreted as meaning that

the Roosevelt coalition was dead; these parties, however, drew only marginal support and actually helped Truman by solidifying the votes of some groups. For example, Truman was not accused of being too easy on the Communists or of being too radical because Wallace and his Communist contingency were so obviously vulnerable to this charge. This paved the way for some former anti-Roosevelt groups such as the farm belt German Catholics and urban Irish to vote for Truman.[23]

In a similar sense, the Dixiecrats solidified for Truman the black vote, a block of votes which Wallace's managers expected to win. According to political scientist Samuel Lubell's figures, 18 per cent of the blacks voted for Truman, 10 per cent for Dewey and less than 1/2 of 1 per cent for Wallace while the majority of the Negroes did not vote in the election.[24] The fact of the Dixiecrat revolt had served to convince black voters that Truman was indeed sincere in his civil rights program. Had he not been genuinely interested in civil rights, they reasoned, he would have modified his position to prevent the bolt. It appears that few Negroes believed political expediency Truman's primary motive. In light of this, it appears that had Truman's civil rights plank won at the convention, his margin of Negro votes might

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[23]Lubell, Future of American Politics, pp. 196-204.

[24]Ibid.

have been decreased considerably. Other factors serving to convince blacks of his concern for them were his executive orders on race relations and his Harlem speech.[25]

Truman also won the votes of the poor, the union members and the ethnic minorities as Roosevelt had done before him. According to the Michigan survey on the election, 57 per cent of the Truman voters annually earned under $3,000 as compared to 33 per cent of the Dewey voters while 53 per cent of the Truman supporters came from working class families, only 21 per cent of Dewey's supporters came from this class. And, on the other hand, 9 per cent of Truman's supporters were in managerial or professional jobs while 37 per cent of Dewey's supporters were in this bracket. Lubell noted that the Jewish vote was not as strong for Truman as it had been for Roosevelt and concluded that for a variety of reasons Truman did not rank with Roosevelt among American Jews.[26] Because of his support from the blue-collar and ethnic minorities Truman did manage to carry the cities, though not as heavily as Roosevelt had. Arthur Holcombe, historian, theorized that the farm vote which Truman won was the essential element that elected Truman.[27]

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[25]Kirkendall, "Presidential Politics," pp. 421-27.

[26]Lubell, Future of American Politics, pp. 207-8.

[27]Arthur Holcombe, Our More Perfect Union; from Eighteenth-Century Principles to Twentieth-Century Practice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 117.

While this thesis may be debatable, the farm vote was, at least important, if not crucial, to Truman's victory.

A number of other factors aided in the election of Truman. His personal warmth and identification with the ordinary citizen may have drawn votes away from the more aloof, sophisticated Dewey. Republican overconfidence which led to moderate campaign efforts must also be taken into account as well as the possibility that the record of the Eightieth Congress cut into Dewey's appeal. In an effort to offset this, Dewey espoused enough of the Truman program to appear as a "me too" type candidate. A series of related factors, then, worked for the election of Truman.[28]

Richard Kirkendall concludes that Truman won because of two factors: party strength and effective campaigning. Truman succeeded in identifying himself enough with the New Deal to convince former Roosevelt men to vote for him. Continuing the New Deal program, Truman appeared to be a friend to labor, the farmer, the Negro, and the common man.[29] Long hours of campaigning and planning along with the execution of clever tactics and maneuvers were all instrumental in the Democratic victory.

Just as historians may long debate the reasons for the Democratic success, and the degree of importance of

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[28]New York Times, November 4, 1948.

[29]Kirkendall, "Presidential Politics," pp. 421-27.

the various factors involved, they may also disagree on the significance of the election as a whole. This election did not serve to realign a significant portion of the population thereby creating a new party balance, for this realignment had been accomplished in the 1930's, a factor which Truman benefitted from. But the 1948 results worked to preserve the gains of the New Deal-Fair Deal years. The election also marked a continuing movement to the left for the Democratic party, at least on domestic issues. The election of the Democrats also indicated that the populace accepted the guidance of the national government in coping with the social and economic ills of the nation. If Roosevelt had seemed liberal to some, Truman could be considered more so, if measured by similar standards. While Roosevelt achieved far-reaching reforms Truman also advocated measures such as civil rights, compulsory medical insurance, and federal aid to education, ideas not fully implemented until the Lyndon Johnson Administration. When the Democrats, many of whom were considered liberals, won majorities in the House and Senate, it appeared initially at least that the forces of liberalism had won. It soon became evident, however, that conservative elements could ban together to defeat much of the Administration's proposed legislation.

The returns of 1948 also convinced Republicans that if they were to win the next presidential election they

would have to find a nonpartisan candidate with widespread appeal to the masses. They found him in the person of General Eisenhower who won a personal, rather than a Republican victory in 1952 and 1956. The arch conservatives in the Republican party who championed the nomination of Taft in 1948, 1952, and 1956 were still dissatisfied and in 1964 aligned themselves with Barry Goldwater.

The election of 1948 warned political predicters to take a more sophisticated look at intra-party struggles. The simplistic view taken in 1948, that the split within the Democratic party doomed it, was proven false. Lubell demonstrated that when certain segments of a coalition break away, other segments just as important may replace them, thus defeat does not necessarily follow the breaking up of a coalition. Without the Dixiecrats and Progressives it is possible that Truman might have lost other elements in the party which might have gone to Dewey and made him the victor.[30] The mere existence of the Dixiecrat party, then, was significant in shaping the outcome of the 1948 election.

The legacy of the Dixiecrat party, hardly venerable, assumes an increasing importance that corresponds to the growth of current right wing movements. While historians are eager to assess and analyze liberal ventures, most find the conservative counterparts less attractive. Yet to

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[30]Lubell, Future of American Politics, pp. 194-95.

dismiss such movements as the George Wallace American party as inconsequential does not necessarily serve to decrease its role in the body politic.

Perhaps the most significant factor concerning the Dixiecrat party was its failure to achieve its major objective of nullifying the civil rights program. Contrary to the picture that some of the Dixiecrat chiefs wanted to portray, the party was constructed around and depended upon the issue of racism The SRD demonstrated that racism alone could no longer solidify the South into a political unit. After appealing to all the old long cherished ideals of the South, they could not so much as gain the support of the politicians from their own region. No politician who aspired to a position in the national political arena could afford to shackle himself with the sectionalism of the Dixiecrats, because, by the late forties, issues that were of greatest significance were of a national, not a regional nature.[31] The southern Democrats used racism at a particularly vulnerable time, when the Democratic party seemed defeated and when Communists were threatening the United States from abroad, and yet they failed to get the response they envisioned. In spite of all these circumstances favorable to their success, the Dixiecrats proved "only that white supremacy, in its classic form at least, is a dead

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[31]Dewey W. Grantham, Jr., The Democratic South (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1965), p. 78.

issue. . . ."[32] The racist followers of the Dixiecrat party helped make racism unrespectable by presenting a picture of extreme backwardness and reaction, a model that few people cared to emulate.

Ironic as it may seem, one of the most significant contributions of the Dixiecrats was the impetus they provided for black progress. In spite of the Dixiecrats goal to stifle Negro progress the lot of the Negro improved. With increasing voting privileges, the Negro became an object worthy of political consideration, a fact of which Truman had long been aware. Clarence Mitchell, N.A.C.P. worker, noted:

> Many Southern officeholders, looking at the rising number of registered Negro voters, are learning to pronounce the word "Negro" with a long e and o instead of saying "Nigra," the time honored Southern way of insulting colored people without actually using an epithet. In the last election the Negro vote in the South punctured the Dixiecrat balloon so badly that no sensible man dares run under the banner in November.[33]

By bringing the race issue to the forefront, the Dixiecrats paved the way for more black progress. In spite of the efforts of a few of the Dixiecrat leaders to play down racism, they succeeded in fooling few if any in regard to their real motives. According to Howard Odum, student of black-white relations, national disavowal of

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[32]Ashmore, "The South's Year of Decision," pp. 1-3.

[33]Clarence Mitchell, "Democrats v. Dixiecrats," Nation, CLXXV (September 27, 1952), 268.

the Dixiecrats in 1948 could be interpreted, in part at least, as reflecting a desire of many Americans to have civil liberties for all citizens.[34] Editorials on civil rights from southern papers were reprinted and read throughout the North causing the editors of northern magazines such as Time to look more deeply into the race problem in the South, thereby giving these problems more publicity. As these researchers studied the problem in the South, they also became aware of northern hypocrisy in racial segregation. In both cases, the Negro was the beneficiary.

The Dixiecrat debacle also marked a decline in the political influence of whites from the black belt region.[35] While the South's traditional politicos had long been aware of their decreasing importance, they suddenly realized by the Dixiecrat defeat that they were now stripped of their former power. It has been demonstrated that black belt whites throughout history had dominated southern politics through the one-party system. For years plantation-minded whites from the black belt repeatedly warned southern voters that strict adherence to the Democratic party was the only way to prevent blacks from rising to positions of power. By a variety of tactical maneuvers, Negroes were carefully excluded from participating in the political

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[34]Howard W. Odum, "This is Worth Our Best," The Southern Packet, V (January, 1949), 2-4.

[35]Key, Southern Politics, p. 10.

process. Simultaneously the Republican party was portrayed as a treasonous affiliation. But by 1948 these traditional southern Democrats were in a curious predicament. The party which served them so faithfully in the past was now deserting its original doctrines, thus causing the Dixiecrats to question and to challenge it.

However, the Dixiecrats unwittingly gave rise to the two-party system in the South even though they were "reluctant midwives, loath to abandon permanently the Democratic monopoly which has served them so well."[36] It was when southern Democrats succeeded at saddling the "nigger" label on the Democratic party that many southerners were forced to consider the virtues of alternative parties. Because of their aims and because of the volatile nature of political parties, the Dixiecrats in 1948 faced a self-destructive dilemma. The Democratic party which had maintained them in power while simultaneously suppressing blacks, was now, with its new philosophy the object of their destruction. Yet by destroying and or discrediting this party they not only jeopardized their own positions but opened the way for black political power. The Dixiecrats, who had worked so hard to block the Negro's participation in the political process, actually "contributed materially to breaking down the party machinery that shackled him."[37]

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[36] Ashmore, "The South's Year of Decision," p. 3.

[37] Ibid.

Although the introduction of the two-party system to the South brought few immediate gains to blacks, a greater opportunity for political participation existed than had previously. In theory, at least, voters were given a choice of candidates and parties, a benefit of democracy long denied to the South. As long as only one party, the Democratic party "southern style," existed, blacks had no hopes whatsoever of being represented. But with the rise of the two-party South, the politically domineering black belt whites gradually lost their power over the politics of the region thereby removing a major obstacle to the political opportunities open to blacks.

On the other hand, perhaps, the Dixiecrat movement was a serious setback to the coming of the two-party system in Dixie. To Harry Ashmore, political journalist, the Dixiecrats were simply Democrats who underneath were actually Republicans.[38] Many who might have voted Republican for the first time had there been only the two major parties running were not forced to do so; instead, they could take a half-way step and vote the Dixiecrat ticket. It is also possible that these "real Republicans" might not have voted at all.

Another result of the Dixiecrats was their service of sharpening factional lines within the Democratic party, thus emphasizing the liberal and conservative groups. While

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[38] Ibid.

this was nothing novel in United States political history, the splinter party did accentuate the trend. Such an alignment has continued until the present day rendering party labels useless for purposes of ideological identification.

The Dixiecrat effect on liberalism in the South is more difficult to assess. Southern liberals like Senators Hill and Pepper were targets of criticism of the Dixiecrats. By forcing liberals into the pro-civil rights camp, they perhaps lost some of their support. Other southerners, liberal on non-racial issues but fearful of being misrepresented by the Dixiecrats temporarily suppressed their liberalism. In the long run it appears that southern liberalism suffered no devastating setbacks. If anything, southern liberalism emerged strengthened, a factor most easily explained by economic changes, however.

The Dixiecrat experience gave impetus to the independent electors movement, the attempt to deadlock the Electoral College. Particularly since 1948, this has been an expected ritual around presidential election time. The South threatens to withhold its electoral vote from both major candidates thereby throwing the election to the House where the South fallaciously believes that states' rights sympathizers may be elected.[39] Mississippi, along

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[39]Samuel Du Bois Cook, "Political Movements and Organizations," in The American South in the 1960's, ed. by Avery Leiserson (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), pp. 142-44. Hereinafter referred to as Cook, "Political Movements."

with Alabama, followed such a course in 1944 and in 1960 but both were abortive efforts.

Since the SRD planned on thwarting the electoral method by throwing the election to the House, arguments for and against the Electoral College were widespread. The Dixiecrat bolt stimulated a considerable amount of talk suggesting the altering of or perhaps even the abolition of the Electoral College. Several proposals were mentioned, one taking the form of an amendment written by the States' Righters but nothing concrete was accomplished.

The creation of the Dixiecrat party marked the first outward signs of significant dissatisfaction with the welfare state trend in this country. This distaste for increasing centralization though long present was a condition which southerners could tolerate especially if they were reaping benefits, such as economic aid, from it. But when the emotional issue of civil rights, supported and enforced by the federal government surfaced, southerners viciously denounced big government. Without the issue of civil rights there would however, have been no revolt of the right in 1948.

The States' Righters had their own ideas about the significance of their movement. Thurmond, for example, wrote that the Dixiecrats showed the leaders of the nation that the South could stand alone and stand up for a principle. His movement, he said, "demonstrated that the South

will no longer be the political doormat for any politician and cannot be kicked around by any Party."[40] It did show that the Deep South could withhold its electoral vote from the national party if it so desired, and perhaps, in this sense, called attention to the fact that the South was no longer bound to the Democratic party. On the other hand, one might conclude that since the Dixiecrats were unsuccessful in their attempts to alter the tenets of the Democratic party toward their philosophy, their weakness within the Democratic party was proven. With the election of Truman who defied the wishes of the South it appeared that this region could be ignored by the national party with impunity. This course, however, would depend upon numerous other favorable circumstances.

Although the Dixiecrat party was not active nationally in the fifties, its ideology pervaded the attitudes of a large number of southerners. Some Dixiecrat sympathizers such as Senators Harry Byrd and James Eastland successfully ran for offices while other southerners still yearned for the nomination of states' rights candidates at the national conventions. Many former Dixiecrats eventually joined the Republican party believing that it was attuned to states' rights conservatism and "constitutional government."[41] Countless former Dixiecrats and Democrats

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[40] Letter, J. Strom Thurmond to Frank Dixon, n.d., Dixon Papers, States Rights Correspondence File.

[41] Ibid.

merged and voted Republican in 1952 and in 1956, thus becoming "Eisencrats." In 1960 although to a lesser degree this trend from Dixiecrat to Republican was still evident in the voting returns. According to historian Dewey Grantham, southerners voting Republican did so primarily because they disliked New Deal economic policies and not solely because of racial policies.[42]

Many of the "Democrats voting Republican," however, became hostile toward Eisenhower over the integration question raised in 1954. Again the racial problem gave rise to another political party, similar to the Dixiecrats, the National States' Rights Party (NSRP) with its headquarters in Birmingham. Characterized by its anti-integration stand and generally militant racist posture, it was created in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1957 from the fragments of the United White Party, a pro-Nazi group dedicated to "Negro-hating and Jew Baiting."[43] In 1960 the NSRP nominated Governor Orvil Faubus of Arkansas for President, an honor which he declined as did J. Strom Thurmond in 1964.[44] It could safely be assumed that their support went to George Wallace in 1968.

The new round of civil rights measures of the sixties further stirred the anti-civil rights forces in the

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[42]Grantham, The Democratic South, p. 79.

[43]Cook, "Political Movements," pp. 142-44.

[44]Ibid.

South. When in 1964, conservatives captured the Republican convention under the leadership of Senator Barry Goldwater, many former Dixiecrats rallied to his banner. It has been noted that Thurmond, who considered Goldwater as having views nearer to his own than those of any other Senator, campaigned vigorously for him. Thus, if the leader of the Dixiecrats gave such strong support to Goldwater's brand of conservatism it is likely that other former Dixiecrats voted similarly. Even though many of the issues in 1964 differed from those of 1948, former Dixiecrats offered wholehearted support to Goldwater.[45]

The Dixiecrats, pioneers of the present day Wallace conservatism, provided the framework within which such a dissident right wing element could function. This movement has undoubtedly benefited from the experiences of the Dixiecrats. The need for an independent party to champion their cause was evident. The minor numerical success of the Dixiecrat candidates as measured by actual votes and their inability to convince either of the major parties to adopt their reactionary attitude toward blacks convinced future states' rights men that for their program to continue, their independent status must continue. In states where the Dixiecrats had appropriated the Democratic label, regular party men would be more alert to

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[45]Merritt Gibson, Private Interview, Longview, Texas, April, 1970; and Ben Laney, Private Interview, Magnolia, Arkansas, April, 1970.

such a possibility again. Consequently, the offspring of the Dixiecrats, the American party of the sixties, ran as a separate and independent group.

That the "Cause" lives on may be of some comfort to the former Dixiecrats who found a hero in George C. Wallace of Alabama. Marshall Frady, critical biographer of Wallace, noted that Wallace, an alternate delegate to the 1948 National Democratic Convention, wore a campaign card that read "Unalterably opposed to the nomination of Harry S. Truman and the so-called Civil Rights Program."[46] Wallace stated later that his chief concern at that time was to vote against the civil rights program and have a record to verify it.[47] If his objective was to establish himself as an anti-civil rights man, his success is unquestionable. Once defeated for Governor by race baiter John Patterson, Wallace swore "I'm not goin' to be out nigguhed again."[48] His party echoes many of the same complaints that Dixiecrats voiced earlier. Wallace, like the Dixiecrats, ignores economics completely and concentrates on three major issues: the federal government, the Negro, and the Communist menace.[49] Wallace consistently

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[46]Marshall Frady, Wallace (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1968), p. 141.

[47]Gladys King Burns, "The Alabama Dixiecrat Revolt of 1948" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Auburn University, 1965), p. 141.

[48]Frady, Wallace, p. 127.

[49]Sherrill, Gothic Politics, p. 304.

rails against integration and frequently alludes to "mongrelization laws" much as the earlier Dixiecrats did. He also receives support from the Ku Klux Klan and Gerald L. K. Smith, former Dixiecrat supporter frequently seen at Wallace rallies and in behind-the-scenes activities.[50] Prior to his own candidacy in 1968 Wallace was attracted to the more conservative Republican party especially in 1964 when, according to Sherrill, he wanted to switch parties but was "upstaged by Strom Thurmond."[51] After his own ambitions were subdued Wallace tacitly supported Barry Goldwater and a program, attractive to former Dixiecrats, designed to refute the whole New Deal. The Deep South states that voted for him did so, according to Lubell, primarily to halt black progress.[52]

But by 1968 Wallace had his own show. In the election much of his support came from small towns and farms and from those, similar to the Dixiecrats, with an anti-Negro, pro-fundamentalist point of view. Unlike the Dixiecrats, however, Wallace also garnered a considerable number of voters from the blue collar northern laborer. Wallace and Thurmond both carried four states from the Deep South --Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. In addition Wallace won Arkansas, due in part to the efforts of

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[50] Ibid., pp. 313-18 and 353-56.

[51] Ibid., p. 351.

[52] Lubell, Future of American Politics, pp. 9-16.

former Governor Laney, whereas Thurmond won South Carolina in 1948 but in 1964 held it for the party he had so recently joined, the Republicans.[53] Thurmond's winning of South Carolina for the Republican party was a part of the so-called "Southern Strategy" whereby Thurmond would work to put the South in the Republican column while national leaders would agree to the selection of a Vice-President with pro-southern sympathies.

When it was discovered that Texas oil men raised two million dollars for the Wallace campaign in 1968, the charge that he was catering to special interests was reminiscent of the earlier Dixiecrat "conspiracy thesis."[54] Some view Wallace as a Neo-Populist pointing to his blend of liberalism in economics and conservatism in civil rights matters. Such an interpretation perhaps was responsible for Goldwater's chiding Wallace for not being a true conservative.[55] Wallace, is, however, conservative enough for the former Dixiecrats, many of whom are George Wallace supporters today. Both Ben Laney and Merritt Gibson were active in the Wallace movement in Arkansas and Texas,

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[53]Robert T. Riley, "The Social Psychology of the Wallace Phenomenon," in Racially Separate or Together? ed. by Thomas F. Pettigrew (McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1971), pp. 232-36 and 252. Hereinafter referred to as Riley, "The Social Psychology."

[54]Sherrill, Gothic Politics, pp. 366-68.

[55]Frady, Wallace, p. 137; and Riley, "The Social Psychology," p. 250.

respectively. And both expressed a similar belief that Wallace was the last bastion of hope to save this country from socialism.[56]

While conservative southern politics embellished with racism continues to thrive today, other forces are at work to undermine this conservatism. Of all the factors revolutionizing southern politics today none is more significant than the economic revolution which is serving to industrialize and urbanize the South. As factories and plants began to dot the map of the South, large migrations of "foreigners" began to infiltrate the region introducing different ideas and attitudes to the inhabitants. Natives of the South began forsaking the plows and flocking to the cities in search of work.[57]

The growth of cities, industry, and labor unions are facilitating the rise of the Negro and strengthening liberalism in general. Black progress which occurs more easily in the city indicates that urbanism may be replacing sectionalism in politics.[58] With the rise of a new urban middle class liberal notions have begun to be respectable at the expense of white supremacy. Also, the steadily increasing number of black votes is making its

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[56]Ben Laney, Private Interview, Magnolia, Arkansas, April, 1970; and Merritt Gibson, Private Interview, Longview, Texas, April, 1970.

[57]Grantham, The Democratic South, pp. 79-80.

[58]Heard, A Two Party South? p. 244.

impact on the political front. As Grantham noted, all these conditions creating new social and economic divisions in turn create new political alliances thus undermining traditional politics and more specifically, black belt dominance.

While the economic basis of the South is changing it seems that politics should automatically follow. This is not the case, however. Social and economic changes require time before affecting the politics of the people --it takes longer to change attitudes than it does conditions shaping these attitudes. Youth are taught the prejudices and pride of the older generations, and this contributes to the political lag in the South.[59] This social conservatism which thwarts change still serves to support racist demagogues like George Wallace. Rural areas still have disproportionate political power and thereby exert political views which tend to be reactionary. The most outspoken opponents of the integration movement have come from the rural, economically deprived regions of the South, whose leaders, feeling their declining social and economic status, latch onto southern traditionalism.[60]

Hopefully the forces for change are much more numerous and powerful than are the forces of reaction in the

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[59]Grantham, The Democratic South, pp. 80-81; and Heard, A Two Party South? p. 245.

[60]Grantham, The Democratic South, pp. 87-88.

modern South. If they are, the South will merge with the rest of the nation in ideology as well as in practice. Before much progress is possible, southerners must first emancipate themselves from that domination by the race question which helped to account for so desperate and unpromising an adventure as the Dixiecrat movement in 1948.

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