Civil Rights and States' Rights

Strom Thurmond

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Following the Southern Governors Conference at Tallahassee setting up our Committee we began an inquiry to determine the most effective ways and means of securing concerted action on the part of the South in opposing the so-called Civil Rights program. We have communicated with party leaders in the various Southern states. We have secured the viewpoints of the Democratic members of Congress from the South. We have surveyed the opinion of rank and file Democrats in every walk of life — the people who have furnished the votes which have made the South solid for the Democratic party.

As a part of our study and inquiry, we asked for a conference with the operating head of the party, Chairman J. Howard McGrath, of the Democratic National Committee. We propounded certain questions to Chairman McGrath which have been made public.

Governor Lane of Maryland, Chairman of the Southern Governors Conference, who sat with us in our meeting in Washington, will announce shortly the time and place of the meeting of the full conference to receive and consider the Committee's report. In the interest of concerted and unified action, we shall not make public our report and recommendations until they have been passed on by the Southern Governors Conference.

The Committee, however, feels that the following statement should be made at this time:

A vast majority of the Democrats of the South are determined to restore the Democratic party to the principles of Jefferson and Jackson and resort to whatever means are necessary to accomplish this end. The Democrats of the South are united in their opposition to the so-called civil rights program proposed by the President and effective action in the Southern states will be taken to prevent adoption of this program.

We feel we are expressing the firm conviction of our people when we say that the present leadership of the Democratic party has deserted the principles of government upon which the Democratic party was founded. As never before, the time has come for strong and effective action by the Southern states not only to save the Democratic party but to preserve the rights of the states to govern themselves and preserve American democracy.

In this fight we are not only expecting support from the Democrats of the South but support from Democrats everywhere who are opposed to a centralized government invading the rights of the people and the rights of the respective states.

The Southern states are aroused and the present leadership of the Democratic party will soon realize that the South is no longer "in the bag." Each Southern state, under the framework of an over-all program, will work out the most effective means of resisting the proposals of the present leadership of the party, but resist them we will.
1. That our people be given the right to express themselves at the polls in November, unembarrassed by traditional affiliation with the national Democratic party. To this end every necessary step should be taken in such states as may be able to do so under existing circumstances and in the time available to provide a slate of presidential and vice-presidential electors free to vote for a true Democrat who is opposed to the invasion by the Federal government of the sovereignty of the states of the Union, and especially to such invasions as the proposed FMC bill, the anti-lynching bill, the anti-poll tax bill, and any Federal laws dealing with the separation of races.

2. That the presidential and vice-presidential electors from the Southern states caucus and agree on candidates for those offices, so that they will vote en bloc in the electoral college.

3. That our people be given the right to re-assert and re-establish their influence in the national Democratic party. To this end every necessary step should be taken by the state conventions of the party to send delegations to the national convention uninstructed as to candidates for the presidential and vice-presidential nominations, and instructed to propose and obtain the restoration of the two-thirds rule, and refrain from participating in the nomination of presidential and vice-presidential candidates.

4. That the delegations to the national Democratic convention engage in all activities of the convention except in the nomination of presidential and vice-presidential candidates, which shall be optional.

5. That the Democratic party in each state continues to function on all levels except in the naming of presidential and vice-presidential electors, including the nomination and election of local, county and state officials and United States Senators and Congressmen.