

## ORIGIN OF THE SOUTHERN MANIFESTO

Early in 1956 Senator Strom Thurmond began approaching Southern Senators with the suggestion that they get together and issue a declaration of their views against the Supreme Court's desegregation decision of May 17, 1954. Senator Harry Byrd expressed a deep interest, so Senators Thurmond and Byrd began working together to get the meeting. In the meantime, Senator Thurmond prepared the first draft of what he thought the declaration should contain. This draft was completed and mimeographed on February 6, 1956.

Later he reworked the first draft into a second draft, which was then presented to the first meeting of Southern Senators called by Senator Walter George, at the request of Senators Thurmond and Byrd. There was some delay in getting this meeting called because some of the Senators were against issuance of such a manifesto, and some felt it would be of no benefit to the overall fight against the Court's decision. One point that helped get the meeting was an indication that Senators Thurmond and Byrd might issue such a manifesto themselves, with as many as would sign without a meeting. Another contributing factor was the thought that such a meeting with issuance of a declaration might be helpful to Senator George in the tough re-election campaign he was expecting to face that year. As the Senior Southerner, Senator George called the meeting in his office on February 8, 1956.

At the first meeting Senator George appointed a committee to prepare and submit to the group a draft of the document. He requested that Senator Thurmond's draft be turned over to the committee for its study and consideration. He also suggested that other members of the group pass on their ideas to the committee. The committee was requested to report to the Group within a brief time.

The committee consisted of Senator Richard Russell, as chairman, with Senators John Stennis and Sam Ervin as members.

This committee did not report back for a few weeks, so Senator Thurmond did some additional work to try to get the manifesto idea moving again. Senator Byrd also helped again by contacting Senator Russell and others. There were indications of continued opposition by some members of the Southern group.

Subsequently, another meeting was held. At that time Senators Spessard Holland, Price Daniel, and William Fulbright offered a draft, which was considered together with the committee draft submitted by Senator Russell's committee. The Holland-Daniel-Fulbright draft was not as strong as either the original Thurmond draft or the Russell draft. It was decided to appoint a new drafting committee under Senator Russell's leadership. The committee members were: Russell, Stennis, Thurmond, Fulbright, and Daniel. This committee was authorized to prepare the final draft and obtain signatures to it and then turn it over to Senator George who would present it in the Senate. This was done on March 12, 1956. At the final meeting of the group it was decided to have Senator George present the Manifesto to the Senate when the committee had completed it. It was to be entitled, "Declaration of Constitutional Principles"

Since some of the Southerners in the House had indicated an interest in presenting a similar document, a copy of this final draft was made and turned over to Congressman Howard Smith who arranged for it to be circulated for signatures in the House.

As finally presented, the Manifesto carried the names of 19 Senators and 94 Congressmen.

Senator George presented the Manifesto with additional remarks. He was followed on the Senate floor by Senator Thurmond with a speech, and by Senator Wayne Morse who denounced the action of the Southern group.

The final draft of the manifesto as presented to the Senate was returned to Senator Thurmond by Senator George upon completion of his speech, and today is in the possession of Senator Thurmond, together with Senator Thurmond's first two drafts and the first Russell Committee draft. Senator Thurmond also has a copy of the Holland-Daniel-Fulbright draft, as does Senator Holland.