

written in
Summer 1964

Jerry DeMuth
2937 Delmar Lane, NW
Atlanta, Georgia 30311

Not published. approx. 2600 words

"The Regular and Lawful
Democratic Party of Mississippi"

"...we, acknowledging with humility the divine power of Almighty God, and standing fearless in our belief in constitutional government, the rights of the states, segregation of the races and preservation of our traditional Southern American way of life, do hereby affirm and declare:

"That we reject and oppose the platforms of both National Parties and their candidates."

This was the resolution of the Platform and Principles of the Mississippi State Democratic Party, passed at its convention in Jackson, June 30, 1960.

Mississippi Law #3107-07 refers to "the so-called National Democratic Party" and "the regular and lawful Democratic Party of Mississippi."

This is the attitude of the Mississippi State Democratic Party toward the National Democratic Party. However in Washington, Mississippi's Democratic Congressmen are very much a part of the national party. Under the seniority system in a party to which they

claim non-allegiance, they hold key committee positions.

Senator James Eastland is chairman of the Judiciary Committee and fourth on Agriculture and Forestry. Senator John Stennis is second on Armed Services, fifth on Aeronautical and Space Sciences, ninth on Appropriations and chairman of the Preparedness Investigating Committee.

Representative William Colmer is second on the Rules Committee. Rep. Abernethy is sixth on Agriculture and second on the District of Columbia Committee. Rep. John Bell Williams is second in Interstate and Foreign Commerce and fifth of the District of Columbia Committee. Rep. Arthur Winstead, fifth on Armed Services; and Rep. Jamie Whitten, sixth on Appropriations.

However, on partisan roll calls in the 87th Congress in the Senate, Eastland voted with the national party only 30 percent of the time, Stennis 48 percent of the time. The average Senate Democrat voted with the national party 67 percent of the time.

In the House, the representatives and their vote percentages are: Abernethy: 37 percent, Colmer: 19 percent, Whitten: 31 percent, Williams: 18 percent and Winstead: 23 percent. The average House Democrat voted with the party 71 percent of the time.

This best of both worlds will be challenged in August at the Democratic National Convention when delegates representing the Freedom Democratic Party of Mississippi, which supports the national party, will try to be seated in place of the regular delegation.

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party has its roots in last year's gubernatorial campaign when Aaron Henry, state NAACP chairman, ran for governor and Rev. Edwin King, white pastor at Tougaloo College, ran for lieutenant governor on a Freedom Vote campaign.

The issues for them became not maintaining segregation but the problems of unemployment, poor education, illiteracy, low wages, and so on. Then four Negroes ran for Congress in the June 2 primary. These were the first steps into the realm of politics taken by progressive forces within the state. The Freedom Democratic Party is the natural outgrowth of these steps.

In mid-June statewide precinct meetings of the Freedom Democratic Party were held, open to all people, white and Negro, who believed in a party that would concern itself with real issues and would be a part of the national party. Because of discriminatory voting registration practices--only seven percent of eligible Negroes are registered--anyone attending need not be registered. Those not officially registered must be registered by freedom registrants, meeting requirements similar to those in northern states.

At the precinct meetings delegates were chosen to the county conventions where delegates to the district conventions will be chosen. Here, in turn, delegates to the state convention will be chosen. And finally national convention delegates will be picked.

Many Democratic state parties, councils and organizations which are currently meeting have passed or will consider resolutions urging seating the Freedom delegation. The Michigan State Democratic Party, the California Democratic Council, the Virginia and Michigan Young Democrats, and others, have already passed such resolutions.

The request to be seated will raise the question of how long the Mississippi Democratic Party can act independently of the national party and of over 40 percent of the state's citizens. It will bring to light a situation--a state party in opposition to the

national party--which has long existed, but the extent of which has been little known.

The rupture between the state and national Democratic Parties has been forming since the 1930s and reached its first climax in 1948. After that the situation was only patched together and another climax may be reached this year.

Mississippi Democrats first became hostile to the national party during the New Deal period. However they remained in the Roosevelt column until 1944 because of still strong traditional loyalties, federal subsidies, and patriotism generated by the war. In 1944, the split in the all-white party began between the states' rights majority and a national party sympathizing minority, when the Mississippi delegation voted for Senator Harry Byrd of Virginia on the nominating ballot at the national convention.

In 1947 Mississippi Governor Fielding Wright touched off the state party bolt with an attack on President Truman's report on civil rights. Then in 1948, the Mississippi Democratic Convention instructed its delegates to withdraw from the national convention "unless they secure an unbroken and complete assurance that the Party and its nominees for President and Vice President will fight against the wilful invasion of States' rights as urged by President Truman in his Civil Rights message to Congress."

Mississippi political leaders, headed by Governor Wright, also called a conference of southern leaders on May 10, 1948. Here the States' Rights Democratic Party was formed. On May 25 they began plans to withdraw their delegation to Montgomery, Alabama, if it was not seated, for a states' rights convention.

The Mississippi delegation was seated but when Andrew J.

Biemiller of Wisconsin offered a resolution commending President Truman for "his courageous stand on the issue of civil rights" and calling on Congress to support a strong civil rights program and this resolution was adopted, the Mississippi delegation walked out. Among those who stormed out were all of Mississippi's national representatives; all seven had been delegates, a record unmatched by any other state.

After the revolt, the Mississippi national committee members were deposed by the national committee.

At the States' Rights convention, J. Strom Thurmond, then governor of South Carolina, was nominated for President, and Governor Wright was nominated for vice-president. These candidates and their program were supported by most state officials and Congressmen and practically all members of the Mississippi Democratic organization.

The Democratic candidates had always been placed first on the Mississippi ballot on grounds that, in the preceding election, they received the largest number of votes. This practice was ended in 1948 to distinguish between the Mississippi Democratic Party and the National Democratic Party. The national party also did not appear under the rooster, the Democratic Party symbol in the South. The candidates nominated by the state Democratic organization appeared there instead. The National Democratic Party was given its own heading as if it was a third party.

Strom Thurmond received all of the electoral votes of Mississippi, as well as of Louisiana, Alabama and South Carolina, and one from Tennessee--thirty-nine electoral votes in all.

In 1951, Hugh L. White, a participant in the 1948 walkout and an ardent states' rights leader, was elected governor of Mississippi.

In early 1952, the Democratic state executive committee strengthened the states' rights position, condemned the proposed civil rights legislation in Congress and endorsed the candidacy^{da} of Sen. Richard B. Russell for President. Russell had entered the race to block Truman and Trumanites.

The Mississippi Democratic Convention passed a "Good Faith Pledge" which asserted the autonomy of the state party and the right to disavow majority decisions of the national convention while at the same time claiming convention seats. The Mississippi Democratic Party would not be bound to the national convention unless or until those actions were approved by the state convention.

The state convention also passed a resolution, giving itself new functions. In the past, it selected delegates to the national convention, nominated presidential electors and selected the state committee that would serve in the next four years.

Now the state convention could also nominate candidates for President and vice-president, adopt a platform, promulgate principles, withdraw from the national party following the national convention and "take such further action deemed proper by the convention."

The state convention was now also authorized to recess and hold a later meeting at which it could hear a report from delegates to the national convention and then instruct the slate of presidential electors as to how to vote. This was a real threat to the National Democratic Party and the state convention used it by voting to recess until August 5, at which time presidential electors would be chosen and any other appropriate action deemed necessary would be taken.

However in June, 1952, a loyalist Democratic group opened an office in Jackson and organized^{ze}, albeit weakly, statewide. This

somewhat restrained the regular Mississippi Democratic delegation to the national convention and the delegation even gave limited assurances of good behavior. After hearing arguments, the convention's credentials committee voted 33 to 17 to seat the states' rights Democrats and the next day, this delegation was seated.

The delegation included both Senators Eastland and ^{en}Stennis, but unlike other years, none of the representatives were included. They probably did not want to attend should they be faced with the question of a walkout--to walkout might jeopardize their committee seniority, not to walkout might jeopardize their chances for re-election.

There was no debate or ~~se~~parate votes on platform issues, nonetheless the Mississippi and Georgia delegations requested to be recorded as voting against the platform.

On all three nominating ballots in 1952, the Mississippi delegation cast all of its 18 delegate votes for Senator Russell. However, aster the general election all of Mississippi's eight electoral ^{ra} votes were cast for Stevenson. But former Governor Wright, leader of the 1948 bolt, took no stand, an obvious rebuff to Stevenson.

These events of 1948 and 1952 led to the work of the Mitchell committee. The committee's purpose was to reach some sort of an agreement on the minimum obligations of the state parties and their delegations toward the national party. One of its adopted recommendations was a specific provision for the ouster of any national committee member who failed to cooperate in the election campaign for the national convention's nominees.

At the 1956 Democratic National Convention, the Mississippi delegation cast all of its 22 votes for Lyndon B. Johnson, who the South looked to as the only person who could save their cause. Most

Mississippi newspapers continued to oppose the National Democratic Party and Mississippi Democratic leaders charged that the "Democratic Party aims to destroy the white race."

But Mississippi again cast all eight of its electoral votes for Stevenson. However this was due largely to heavy votes in the northeastern and southern parts of the state. In the northeast active volunteers for Stevenson and the True Democrats were influential while in the south the labor vote is strong.

At the 1960 Democratic National Convention the Mississippi delegation cast all 23 votes for Governor Ross Barnett, and didn't switch them. Still it pledged to support the nominees of the Democratic National Convention. But after the national convention ended, the Mississippi Democratic Party reconvened and voted to support unpledged electors in an effort to defeat the national party nominees. On December 19, the unpledged slate of eight electors cast all of its votes for Sen. Harry F. Byrd. The Mississippi Democratic Party--despite the Mitchell committee provisions and other rules--went unpunished.

On January 31 of this year, the Democratic National Committee unanimously adopted a resolution requiring that "a State Democratic Party, in selecting and certifying delegates to the Democratic National Convention, thereby undertakes to assure that voters in the State will have the opportunity to cast their election ballots for the Presidential and Vice-Presidential nominees selected by said convention, and for electors pledged formally or in good conscience to the election of these Presidential and Vice-Presidential nominees, under the Democratic Party label and designation" and that the delegates be "bona fide Democrats". However, indications are strong that Mississippi will again violate both of these provisions.

Leading the delegation to the 1964 national convention will be Governor Paul B. Johnson who told the Mississippi electorate during his campaign last year that he was no longer a member of the National Democratic Party. In October, 1963, Johnson and Lt. Gov. Gartin said in a joint statement: "Paul Johnson and Carroll Gartin owe no allegiance to either national party. We are committed to no one and no group outside of the borders of our beloved state."

One of Johnson's official campaign ads said: "Paul Johnson stands before you and before the nation symbolizing Mississippi's official policy of resistance to unconstitutional federal authority." Gov. Johnson has been cited for civil contempt for defying a federal court order at the University of Mississippi.

Johnson's campaign song, sung by the Magnolia State Quartet, went: "Up there on the wide Potomac, / Kennedy Democrats done gone mad, / But so help me, I believe, / The GOP is just as bad."

In his campaign, he pointed out his support of the 1962 Senate Resolution 106 titled: "A concurrent resolution declaring and recording the contempt of the Mississippi legislature for the Kennedy administration and its puppet courts; calling upon its sister states to join in ridding this once great nation of the Kennedy family dynasty and accompanying evils; and for related purposes."

And his campaign literature explained: "The best way to ^{ea} bat the Kennedys... is to elect Paul Johnson Governor..."

In Johnson's official campaign brochure, titled "Danger, Two-Party System in Mississippi Would End Our Way of Life", the Mississippi Democratic Party's attitude toward and lack of support of the National Democratic Party was explained:

"Our Mississippi Democratic Party is entirely independent and is free of the influence or domination of any national political

Party
 party...Both the National Republican/and the National Democratic Party are the dedicated enemies of the people of Mississippi... Neither national party as constituted today offers any hope to free men and women who value their independence and their honor. Both parties--if their platforms and their past action are any guide-- threaten our Mississippi traditions, institutions and segregated way of life.

"The Mississippi Democratic Party--which long ago separated itself from the National Democratic Party, and which ~~has~~^{is} fought consistently everything both national parties stand for--offers to the citizens of Mississippi, and to the troubled white conservative majority throughout America, their only chance to raise^{se} a conservative voice in the land.

"The Mississippi Democratic Party is not subservient to any national party. It has its own statement of principles adopted in convention in Jackson, and these are in direct conflict with the position of both national parties."

After Johnson won the Democratic primary, his official campaign newspaper, The Johnson Journal, declared: "By the greatest vote in our State's history, Mississippians have repudiated the influence of the National Democratic Party in Mississippi."

On August 30, 1963, 95 members of the Mississippi House of Representatives passed a resolution which declared: "The Mississippi Democratic Party has no alliance with the National Democratic Party."

And the Mississippi Association of (County) Supervisors, during its September 8-10 convention, noted that the Mississippi Democratic Party "is a State party, that it is an instrument solely of Mississippi citizens, and that it is independent of both the National Democratic Party and the National Republican Party."

The chairman of the Mississippi Democratic Party is Bidwell Adam. He has been chairman for eight years and was chairman of the Harrison County Democratic Party for 28 years. From 1928 to 1931 he served as lieutenant governor under Governor Theodore Bilbo and a framed photo of Bilbo still sits on his desk. In an interview last June, Adam declared, "The Mississippi Democratic Party is dedicated first, last and always to segregation. We've always been that way, and I don't see any changes in the foreseeable future."

This attitude toward segregation is stated at great length in the party's platform and is practiced by all means, legal and illegal. For example, during the 1955 gubernatorial primary, no Negro votes were counted. T. J. Tubb, chairman of the Mississippi Democratic Executive Committee, instructed his election managers to challenge any Negro voters. "We don't intend to have any Negroes voting in this primary," he said, "but we also intend to have it carried out in an orderly, sensible manner."

The state party's platform states, "We believe in the separation of the races in the universities and colleges, in the public schools, in public transportation, in public parks, in public playgrounds, and in all spheres of activity where experience has shown that it is for the best interest of both races that such separation be observed."

This then is the party that controls the state legislative, executive and judicial branches in Mississippi. All 49 state senators and all but one of the 122 state representatives are Democrats. All state executive officials such as governor, secretary of state and attorney general are Democrats. All county registrars, who have refused to register a significant number of qualified Negroes, are Democrats.

According to the Mississippi Democratic Party's 1960 platform a person must support the party's racist platform in order to vote in the primary or participate in the party's affairs. Also, quoting the platform, "He should declare unequivocally against the legislative executive and judicial branches of the Federal government usurping the powers reserved to the states."

This means that anyone who supports the national Democratic Party cannot participate in the Mississippi Democratic Party.

When seating of the Mississippi delegation at the national convention is considered, an important decision will be made as to whether the national Democratic Party will continue to keep attached to it a state party that is neither Democratic or democratic.

#