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WHEN THE SOUTHERN VOTE WAS COUNTED

AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF THE NEGRO VOTE IN THE SOUTH - ON THE 1964 ELECTION

Produced By:
Political Education Project
associated with
Students for a Democratic Society
119 Fifth Ave. room 309 GR-3-7274
New York, New York 10003

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE SOUTH?

Of the six southern states carried by the Democratic Party in the 1964 Presidential election, four (Arkansas, Florida, Tennessee and Virginia) clearly would have gone Republican had it not been for the Negro vote. One other, North Carolina, might have. Only in President Johnson's home state of Texas among the eleven states of the South did the Democratic Party clearly receive the majority of white votes.

Similarly, in a number of U.S. House and Senate races, Democratic success would not have been won without Negro support.

The states which President Johnson carried have the highest Negro reg istration; he failed to carry those with less than 45% of eligibie Negroes registered.

In Georgia, Louisiana, and South Carolina, Senator Goldwater carried 54%, 57%, and 59% of the vote respectively; strong Negro support of the Democrats prevented even larger margins. In Mississippi and Alabama, where the Republican vote was of landslide proportions (87% and 69%), Negro voter registration is abnormally low. Both of these states are notorious for intimidation and other blocks to the constitutional rights of Negroes to vote.

Registration of Negro southern voters has been the chief activity of the Voter Education Project of the Southern Regional Council during the past two years. This has been a non-partisan effort, endorsing no candidates or parties. Working cooperatively with the principal civil rights groups and many local citizen's groups, it has sought a rapid acceleration of Negro registration throughout the South. The results of this concentrated drive are revealed by a simple comparison: between 1952 and 1962, Negro registration increased from 1,008,614 to only 1,386,654. From 1962 to Fall,1964, it rose to 2,164,200. These increases were spread over the South. <u>But</u>, in three states only relatively small gains were made: Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi.

Increases in Negro registration exceeding the normal rate of increase were responsible for Democratic victories in two states: Arkansas and North Carolina.

In addition to the effect of the Negro vote on the Presidential election, it was responsible for election of many local and state office holders throughout the South, including some Negroes. The latter included two justices of the peace, a member of the school board and a member of the county board of revenue in Macon County, Alabama; a second Negro senator in Georgia, in a district where the majority of voters are white; a member of the State House of Repre-

sentatives and a county judge in Shelby County, Tennessee. It was responsible also for adoption of a constitutional amendment in Arkansas which sets up a permanent voter registration system for the first time, and eliminates the poll tax in all elections, not just federal elections as required by the Twenty-Fourth Amendment.

These are findings from a study of complete and nearly complete election returns from the eleven states of the South. They emphasize, among other things, the importance of the Negro vote and of the race issue in understanding what happened in the South --- an understanding of value to the nation because the Deep South was the only place outside Senator Goldwater's home state where his candidacy was successful.

Despite some attempts at it, there can be little persuasive argument that voters of the South did not understand clearly that for the first time in recent history the two candidates for the Presidency of the United States offered a clear-cut, opposed view on the race issue. This was accompanied in most southern states this year by the blunt ejection of Negroes from their traditional participation in Republican Party organization, the "lily-white" conversion of the Party of Lincoln. Republican strategy in the South, baldly stated in some quarters, was to compensate for loss of Negro voters with great gains of white voters. There were, indeed, mass defections of previously Democratic white voters to the Republican candidate, and --- as elsewhere in the nation --- there was almost unanimous support of the Democratic candidate by Negroes.

The other issues of the campaign undoubtedly entered into the outcome in the Deep South, as the figures in this study will show, but it was strongest in Mississippi and Alabama. In both, support of Senator Goldwater by white leaders was virtually unanimous. In Alabama, of course, voters were not able to vote for the Democratic candidate, but chose between the Republican candidate and a slate of unpledged electors controlled by Governor George Wallace. Governor Wallace was left with the Alabama Democrats in the shambles of a Republican sweep which, in the election of five freshmen Republican congressmen, destroyed nearly a century of seniority for three conservative Democratic congressmen, and put the GOP in charge of ten county courthouses. Probably only in his battles against school desegregation has Governor Wallace served better the cause he was against.

In all five states that went Republican, the Goldwater cause was helped (and the race issue emphasized) by defections of politicians noted through the decades as leaders in the southern resistance to equal citizenship for Negroes. Others of this stripe refused to work for the Democratic ticket. In Georgia, this refusal by U.S. Senator Richard Russell, and, to an almost equal extent, U.S. Senator Herman Talmadge, was considered probably crucial to de-

defeat of their party, despite strenuous work for the ticket by Governor Carl Sanders.

The lily-white strategy failed (six states to five) over the whole of the South. It is notable that the five states which went Republican in 1964 are those which (with the exception once of Louisiana) had not since Reconstruction voted for a Republican Presidential candidate, and were not before the ascendancy of the new Republicanism considered the southern states where Republican strength on the local level was most solidly based. With the exception of Georgia, they were the states which voted Dixiecrat in 1948.

Senator Goldwater lost Florida, Texas, Tennessee, and Virginia, all of which in recent years had supported Republican Presidential candidates. Florida, Tennessee, and Virginia had, in fact, voted Republican in 1952, 1956, and 1960. In Florida, Texas, Tennessee, and Virginia, as well as in North Carolina and Arkansas, Republican grassroots gains over the years had been considered solid. But in 1964, Republicans suffered setbacks in all in local and state races.

While Republicans gained five U.S. House seats in Alabama and one each in Georgia and Mississippi, they lost two in Texas, for a net gain of five. The Mississippi U.S. House victory of a conservative Republican unseated one of the Democrats' ultra-conservatives of long-standing, Representative W. Arthur Winstead, an irony repeated in several of the southern upsets.

The Republicans elected no new U.S. Senators and no governors in the South. In state legislatures, they netted a loss of two seats, with significant gains only in Georgia. There were no legislative races in Mississippi and Alabama, but in Louisiana and South Carolina, the Goldwater landslide did not carry over to lesser offices.

To the extent that Republicans made genuine and lasting gains in grassroots political strength in the formerly one-party South, to that extent is democracy strengthened. Time---and the future policy perhaps of both parties---will tell what happened in the South along these lines.

Meanwhile, these points seem clear:

1. Effective Negro registration and participation in elections is the best assurance that race will be eliminated as a politically profitable issue, as it was this time in six southern states, and that all the southern states will be freed from the threat of demagogic appeals to racism.

2. Continued efforts to achieve the basic constitutional right of the ballot for Negroes is essential in all eleven states, and is most notably needed in those two states where the Negro electorate is most restricted. This is not for the

advantage of any one political party over the other, but necessary for healthful self-government in the South and the nation. Past experience proves conclusively that the abnormality of almost unanimous Negro support of a candidate or a party (the so-called bloc vote) occurs in the South only when the race issue is raised, and there are clearly opposed stands on it.

3. While the presidential results of 1964 certainly did not provide a head-count on the race issue, North or South, they do suggest that racism remains, region-wide, a pressing public problem in the South. Over the rest of the nation, with backlash and frontlash knocking each other out, the issue is alive and serious, but perhaps not as deeply imbedded in the fabric of society and government as many had thought.

4. In the pragmatic terms of politics, Democrats and the nation's majority owe a greater debt to the Negro electorate in the South than has so far been acknowledged.

(The Democratic Party, for example, would seem to owe its Negro constituency better treatment than was afforded one of its political leaders in Atlanta, Horace Ward. Mr. Ward won nomination to a state senate seat in the Democratic primary over a white opponent, only to have campaign envelopes prepared for this Democrat used by the Republican candidate, also white, in the general election race. Other Democratic spokesmen and resources did not visibly aid Mr. Ward. He nevertheless won---with little thanks to his party.)

5. In these same pragmatic terms, and perhaps in moral ones as well, the Republican Party needs to examine carefully its future southern policy. The 1964 election returns seem to indicate the futility of trying to gather in all of the South for a base keyed to racism, and the futility of trying to appeal to the rest of the nation from the positions necessary to holding that remnant of the South in which racism overrides other issues. And the experience of the Democrats in this century offers many unhappy examples of the difficulties involved in trying to contain within one national party the stubborn racist remnant in the South as well as the representatives of the majority of Americans, North and South, who believe in democracy.

6. The tradition of Southern Negro support for Republican candidates in the past is well known. Results in Arkansas in 1964 underscore the willingness this year as ever of Negroes to vote for Republican candidates acceptable to their aspirations and dignity. The previously avid segregationist Democratic candidate for re-election as governor, Orvil Faubus,

actively sought the Negro vote this year in campaign activities and literature, including boasts about the amount of integration in Arkansas. Despite this, Negroes over the state supported the Republican candidate, Winthrop Rockefeller, whose support of Negro aspirations was of longer standing. Returns in the Negro precincts of Pine Bluff, Arkansas, offer a fascinating example of this selectivity in balloting: they went 97.8% for President Johnson, and 88.5% for Republican Rockefeller. For a constitutional amendment to remove the poll tax as a prerequisite for voting, there was again great agreement, 85.1% in favor. But in a contest for mayor, where race was not an issue, there was a normal spread among three candidates, 29.9%, 14.6% and 55.5%, the latter going for the only candidate who appeared before Negro audiences seeking their vote and who won by only 101 votes.

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The estimate of Negro voting in this study is purposely conservative. It was arrived at by calculating the percentage of the total electorate which voted, and then assuming that the same percentage of the Negro electorate voted. Actually, in most areas, the Negro turnout was higher than that of the total electorate, a mark of political maturity worth noting. In all the southern states the Negro vote may be assumed to have been more than 95% Democratic.

I. Florida, Tennessee, Arkansas and Virginia are the states in which President Johnson's victory was clearly attributable to the Negro vote plus a white minority.

Florida--Johnson margin: 37,800 votes. Estimated Negro vote: 211,800.

The voter registration drives accounted for an increase in Florida Negro voter registration from 1962 to 1964 that was 121,000 in excess of normal increase.

Virginia--Johnson margin: 77,000. Estimated Negro vote: 166,600.

The voter drive increase in excess of normal Negro registration from 1962 to 1964 was 78,700.

Tennessee--Johnson margin: 126,000. Estimated Negro vote: 165,200.

The voter drive increase in excess of normal Negro registration from 1962 to 1964 was 32,900.

Arkansas--Johnson margin: 65,400. Estimated Negro vote: 67,600.

The Arkansas voter drive increase in excess of normal Negro registration from 1962 to 1964 was 19,200. Without this extra in-

crease, Democrats would not have carried the state.

II. In North Carolina, President Johnson would most probably not have won without the Negro vote.

Johnson margin: 173,900. Estimated Negro vote: 168,400.

The North Carolina voter drive increase in excess of normal Negro registration from 1962 to 1964 was 38,400. Without this extra increase, the Democrats would not have carried the state.

III. In Texas, President Johnson clearly carried the majority of white voters.

Johnson margin: 684,100. Estimated Negro vote: 325,500.

Texas is the only state where registration drives supported by the Voter Education Project included a sustained effort to register white as well as Negro voters. The increase in Negro registration was 134,600 in excess of normal increases from 1962 to 1964.

IV. The Goldwater margins in Georgia, Louisiana, and South Carolina were considerably less than they would have been without the heavy Negro support of President Johnson.

In Georgia, more of the Negroes eligible to vote are not registered (343,000), than are (270,000). If only 40% of those who are not registered had been registered, and if they had followed the same turnout and voting pattern, the state would have been carried by President Johnson.*

Georgia--Goldwater, 578,509; Johnson, 487,581. Margin: 90,900. The estimated Negro vote: 178,700.

Louisiana--Goldwater, 503,545; Johnson, 387,811. Margin: 115,700. Estimated Negro vote: 122,000.

Here, too, more eligible Negroes are not registered (350,000) than are registered (164,800). Registration of only 45% of those unregistered would have changed the results in Louisiana.

South Carolina--Goldwater, 311,144; Johnson, 219,613. Margin: 91,500. Estimated Negro vote: 90,300.

Again, more eligible Negroes are not registered (227,000) than are registered (144,000). Registration of 65% of those unregistered would have been required to change results.

V. Alabama and Mississippi show the impact of the race issue where disenfranchisement of Negroes is still relatively great.

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*It should be emphasized again that our estimates of Negro turnout are simply the state averages. All evidence indicates that the Negro turnout was higher. This would mean, for example, that less than a 40% increase of Negro registration would have changed the Georgia decision.

Alabama--Goldwater, 454,313; Unpledged Democrats, 200,355. Margin: 254,000. Estimated Negro vote: 68,100.

Here, of eligible Negroes, only 110,000 are registered, compared with 370,000 who are not.

Mississippi--Goldwater, 359,693; Johnson; 53,063. Margin: 306,600. Estimated Negro vote: 21,200.

In this state, not more than 28,500 Negroes are registered. Another 394,000 are eligible, but unregistered.

VI. In Congressional races analyzed, the Negro vote was in some cases even more crucial to Democratic victories than in the Presidential race.

In Tennessee, Sen. Albert Gore defeated Republican Dan Kuyhendall by a margin of 73,500votes. The estimated Negro vote was 153,300. Democrat Ross Bass defeated Republican Howard Baker for the U.S. Senate by an even smaller margin, 52,300. The estimated Negro vote was 157,900.

Sen Ralph Yarborough in Texas defeated Republican George Bush by 343,100. The estimated Negro vote (again conservative) was 320,500.

In Georgia, Democrats drew comfort from election of two Atlanta Democrats to the U.S. House. Rep. Charles Weltner defeated Republican James O'Callaghan by 12,300 votes. The Negro vote was 32,100. Democrat James Mackay defeated Republican Roscoe Pickett by 15,760. The estimated Negro vote (conservative) was 14,600.

The Negro vote was the key to one Tennessee U.S. House race, a substantial part of victory in another. In the Ninth District, Democratic George Grider defeated Republican Robert B. James by 11,700 votes. The Negro vote was at least 70,000. In the Fifth District, Democratic Representative Richard Fulton defeated Republican Bill R. Wills by 25,100 votes. The Negro vote was at least 18,000.

In the Second District of Louisiana, Democratic Representative Hale Boggs won over Republican challenger David C. Treen by 17,900 votes. The Negro vote was at least 25,000.

As said earlier, race was the controlling factor of the Presidential election in the Deep South. Whereas these states took some helpful steps toward a two party politics, including impressive statewide organization in Alabama and South Carolina, the principal showing was that one party builds its appeal almost entirely on race the electorate will be polarized on that question. So intense was the rejection of the Democrats by large blocs of white voters that even strongly conservative Democratic candidates, e.g. Representative George Huddleston, Jr. of Birmingham, were swept out of office. So intensely did Negroes reject the Republican Party that voting by them clearly accounted for the victory of some strongly conservative Democrats; among others, Rep. Robert Casey of Houston owes his reelection to the Negro vote.

LITERATURE FROM P. E. P.

1. Johnson With Eyes Open by Robb Burlage
   Issued before the election, this paper is still relevant as a discussion of Johnson's history and style of politics. The paper includes most of Johnson's congressional voting record 10¢

2. The March On Frankfort: A Study in Protest Organization by Jim Williams
   A participant's account of the attempt to organize popular pressure for a state civil rights act in Kentucky in March 1964. 10¢

3. When the Southern Vote Was Counted reprinted from the Southern Regional Council
   This paper analyzes the election returns in the South, emphasizing Johnson's debt to the Negro voter. 10¢

4. This Is the War That Is by Tom Gish, reprinted from the Whitesburg Mountain Eagle describes the inability of the people of Eastern Kentucky to be heard in the planning of the poverty program for that area. 10¢

5. The Extremists an illustrated pamphlet on the Ultra-right issued by the AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education.

6. The New Lost Generation: Jobless Youth by Mike Harrington reprinted from the N.Y. Times Magazine. Deals with unemployment among teens and working youth. Free.

7. A Guide to Community Political Research by Arthur Waskow. Tells how to determine the ripeness of an area for rapid political transition. Free.

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