

MARTIN CITES NEGRO GAINS, WARNS BIGOTS

Remarks of Louis Martin, Deputy Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, at the twenty-fourth annual meeting of the National Newspaper Publishers Association at San Francisco.

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WE ARE MEETING TODAY at a moment in history when the foes of human decency, particularly in the State of Mississippi, are making desperate attempts to turn back the tide of history. They have been on the losing side and the closer they come to their final hour, the more terrible and insane their actions.

As this is written, three young Americans, two of them white and one colored, are missing in Mississippi under circumstances which suggest, what all of us fear, that they have been deliberately murdered.

This horrible development is not altogether surprising because we know the history of race relations in Mississippi. We know the terrible toll that has been taken in human life by crazed bigots there year in and year out.

President Lyndon Johnson is determined to bring an end to this reign of terror and the Attorney General is using the full resources under his command to see that justice is done in this case.

You and I know that shocking incidents of brutal inhumanity will not stop our forward movement. The overwhelming majority of the American people are revolted by acts of insane violence and wanton lawlessness. They will always rally to the banner of justice and human decency.

THE AMERICAN NEGRO is no longer the invisible man. The civil rights issue is no longer a back page item but a headline story in the nation's press. Today as we approach the national election it is generally predicted that the civil rights issue may dominate the political campaigns.

However much Democrats and Republicans may blast each other in the campaign oratory, we can take some comfort in the fact that the history-making civil rights bill, which will be signed shortly by President Johnson, was passed in the Congress with bi-partisan support.

For decades we have been writing stories and editorials denouncing the coalition in the Congress between tory Republicans and Southern Democrats. Last week this unholy alliance was broken. The historic Senate cloture vote and the passage of the bill by a 73 to 27 vote represents a new day in America.

The bill was passed one year after it was sent to the Congress by the late President John F. Kennedy and six months after President Johnson told the nation:

"We have talked long enough in this country about equal rights. We have talked 100 years or more. It is time to write the next chapter, and write it in the books of law."

A major share of the credit for this magnificent development must be given to the Negro newspapers. Yours has been truly a voice in the wilderness. Long before most of the civil rights leaders of today were born and in the long night of national silence on this issue your newspapers carried headline stories and editorials week after week crying out for action. You carried in your pages the messages of the Negro leaders in the period when, to paraphrase James Baldwin, nobody knew their names. The seeds sown by you and those who preceded you are now beginning to blossom and they bear the fruit of freedom.

Despite all the arguments to the contrary, I believe that we are living in the most promising moment in our history. I recognize that two noisy and irrational groups are threatening to upset our hopes for the future.

We have the whites on the radical right who preach states rights but really support the rights of white supremacists. On the other hand we have the misguided black nationalists who preach a specious doctrine that inspires racial hatred.

The propagandists for these groups are clever and we dare not underestimate their capacity to make trouble. These two groups have some things in common. They do not have any faith in our democratic system and they do not believe in the basic democratic ideal that every man should be judged on merit instead of the color of his skin. . .

MY FEELING OF PROMISE is based primarily on developments since 1960 in government and in the private sector of our society. I do not

wish to sound too partisan but I am convinced that the vital spirit and courageous actions of the late President Kennedy and now President Johnson have inspired the whole nation to move forward in the field of race relations.

In 1961 President Kennedy began immediately to open the doors of the White House and the federal establishment to qualified Negro citizens. Andrew Hatcher and Cecil Poole of San Francisco and Postmaster Leslie Shaw of Los Angeles are among a long list of decision-makers appointed by this Democratic Administration.

Up until 1961 Negroes had never served as heads of independent agencies of the Federal Government, never served as Deputy Assistant Secretaries of the Departments of State, Commerce and Agriculture, never served as United States Attorneys, never served on Federal Regulatory Commissions, never served as Judges of the U.S. District Courts, never served as Postmaster of a major American city, and never held any position as powerful as the Commissioner of the District of Columbia. Last week President Johnson named the second Negro Lawyer to a decision-making post in the White House, Clifford Alexander of New York.

These Negro decision-makers in government are helping to change the stereotyped image of the Negro all over America. If Dr. Robert Weaver and Carl Rowan can administer powerful agencies of government with budgets in the billions, why cannot similarly qualified Negroes hold important positions in private industry? Many great corporations are beginning to answer that question. The examples set by government employment and the President's own program on plans for progress have induced many captains of industry to recruit Negroes and give them executive posts.

The ceiling on the aspirations of the Negro child today has been dramatically lifted. The young Negro boy and girl now are more assured than ever before that they can rise as high as their abilities and talents can take them. The old stereotype of a Negro shuffling along with a mop in one hand and a bucket in the other is being laid to rest forever. . .

DR. JEANNE NOBLE and other distinguished Negroes are now working with Sargent Shriver in preparing a national attack on poverty.

A Negro, Leroy Johnson, sits in the Georgia legislature and two Negroes are members of the executive committee of the Democratic Party of Georgia. Last month a Negro, B.A. Cephas, was elected to the Richmond, Virginia, city council in a city wide race. The significant fact in this race was that Cephas received the second highest vote total among 21 candidates.

A Negro has been nominated in the Democratic primary for the North Carolina legislature. The number of Negroes elected to city councils in the South is steadily increasing. Negroes now hold elective offices in Macon County, Alabama, where just two years ago the Justice Department waged a bitter battle to permit them to register. Incidentally, it is interesting to note that the Department of Justice has appointed Negro Deputy United States Marshals in seven Southern cities since 1962, including Birmingham, Alabama, and Jackson, Mississippi.

The new civil rights law and the recent decision of the United States Supreme Court af-

fecting legislative districts are certain to have a profound impact on the political future of the Southern Negro. Credit also must be given to the courageous struggle of Southern Negroes to win the right to register and vote freely. They have defied every danger and some, like Medgar Evers, have given their lives in this noble effort.

While this valiant fight to register and vote is being made by Southern Negroes far too many Negroes of voting age in our great Northern cities apparently could not care less about the franchise. Whatever the reasons, the fact remains that too many Northern Negroes are not registered and do not vote.

Thirty-six out of every hundred Americans of voting age did not vote in the 1960 Presidential election because most of them were simply not registered. Among our own group almost fifty out of every hundred Negroes of voting age in the North did not vote in 1960.

IN OUR POLITICAL EFFORTS we shall continue to press for the mobilization of the full political power of our people. I believe that our joint efforts to get more citizens registered and to the polls on election day will strengthen the truly democratic forces in our country. The smaller the electorate, the easier it is for a small band of fanatics to work their will and dominate the people.

This brings me to a point which I cannot stress too strongly. While my general outlook for the future is hopeful, I recognize that in the last analysis, what we make of the future will be determined in a great measure by our own actions.

The new civil rights law will give us badly needed tools with which we can help build a better America, the great society. There will always be strong resistance to social changes and we are not going to win a greater measure of freedom without continuous work and sacrifice.

Finally, my observations of current developments have led me to certain conclusions which I put in the form of predictions. I predict the following:

1) Despite the terrorism in Mississippi and other parts of the South, I believe that Southern Negroes through their political astuteness and deep commitment to the civil rights cause will win representation in all the local and state governments of the South within a decade.

2) The religious leadership of the nation will become the strongest ally of Negroes and with their help we will be able to abolish de facto segregation in the North within a decade.

3) Despite all the talk of a white backlash, no candidate for the Presidency of the United States who chooses to exploit racial prejudice in his campaign can win.

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