

Let's Face It

The Demise Of The Democratic Party In Georgia

By E. R. Bradley



Last evening at 7 o'clock--when the polls closed--the Democratic Party of Georgia committed suicide. It is dead politically and will be for perhaps a decade or more. In the selection of Maddox to head the Democratic Party it made the election of Calloway a certainty. But worse than this, it has now placed at the head of the party an extremist who lacks the sophistication of Wallace, and who will continue to embarrass Georgia in the nation's news media. We have now replaced Alabama and Mississippi in the national press as the most backward state, politically speaking, in the South. This is so even if Calloway is elected, for Lester will continue his press releases and head the party's delegation to the Democratic National Convention in 1968.

Maddox, who is sure to suffer a defeat in November, will carry with him such men as Vandiver and Sanders, and perhaps even Mayor Allen in the next election. That is, these men's future in Georgia is out the window. A coalition of extremists will dominate for sometime. Even Talmadge's seat is insecure, and Russell will be replaced by Calloway either during the term or when Russell's term of office is over. (I am assuming his health will not allow his running in 1972.)

Political scientists will long evaluate how the state of Georgia with its enlightened leadership could suddenly go into reverse. The backlash will be some people's answer. But an analysis of the size of the vote shows that it was a case of apathy. "Stayhomeitis" hit Georgia. A minority of unreconstructed rebels, aided and abetted by thousands of office-hungry Republicans, dealt the death blow. As a matter of fact, the only Democrat of stature in Georgia who had the courage to try to save his party from a Klan-type leadership was Garland Byrd. No other candidate, past or present, liberal or conservative, spoke out for Arnall.

Carter made a last-minute aside for Arnall, but it was weak and largely ineffective. In fact, he never mentioned Arnall's name.

On November 8 we have the choice between Democratic extremism and Republican extremism. The shadow of Ol' Marv hangs over the Republican Party, but at least it will not be openly racist. But in the end there would be little difference between Maddox and Calloway in office. Neither is progressive; neither will project an image which will bring support from the national party. Georgia must now go it alone. In effect we have seceded from the union.

So now a poorly led and divided party must hand its head in shame while it tries to gain respectability and support. It will be a long, hard road, for the Republicans will capture and hold the Negro vote even without a contest. Having declared war on the Negro, alienated the liberals, and turned its back on Washington, the Democratic Party in Georgia will find the road back bitter and frustrating.



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