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Suffrage in the South

Part II: The One Party System

by **GEORGE C. STONEY**

1. HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE INCLUDED IN THE "SOLID SOUTH"? If you are talking about the people in those dozen states usually thought of as southern, people who sing Stephen Foster lyrics with the proper elisions, or who like their turnip greens cooked with pork, then you can count in about the whole twenty-seven million. But if you are talking about the people who will form the political "Solid South" this coming November, then the number is nearer to three million. Among these can be included fewer than fifty thousand of the South's estimated total of eight million Negroes.

In a sequel to his study of the poll tax, this young southern writer further analyzes democracy in Dixie. His findings and his conclusions, carefully checked by southern researchers, are especially significant in this year of national elections.

2. Democratic primaries in the next few months will bring out larger number of voters, pushing up the total of southerners who in any way take part in the direction of their government to a maximum of five million. The extent of this participation, however, is limited in every state and in almost every community by an unshakable dominance of one or another political clique.
3. Now this condition is not peculiar to the South. It is respread over the country, particularly in municipal and county politics, that one might almost call it the general pattern. It would not be fair to say that people in southern politics are any worse than those in other places, either. The main difference between southern control and that exercised in other states is the one party system. All the politics worth bothering about take place inside the Democratic Party. There is no opposition party to act as a check.
4. Each state, of course, has a Republican Party, made up for the most part of former postmasters, their families, and such other patronage hunters as have faith in the return of national Republicanism. In the mountains of Tennessee, Virginia, North

Carolina and Alabama, there are counties as strongly Republican as the rest of the state is Democratic. Their Republicanism is traditional, an expression of old anti-slavery and anti-rest-of-the-state feeling, but it is sliding away as new roads and federal relief come in. These small groups make no bid for statewide power. They hold their counties; the Democrats hold theirs. Between the two is often a disturbingly close cooperation. In Kentucky, the only state with an opposition party strong enough to win a statewide election, the governorship swung back and forth between the parties every four years from 1907 to 1935, as if by arrangement. All the Republican counties are ones with small Negro populations.

5. BECAUSE THE PRIMARY IS THE main election in the South, some observers have underestimated the representativeness of southern democracy; they have assumed that the number of people voting in the general presidential election is the maximum number of people who take part. Consider these three examples: In the city of Spartanburg, S.C., the usual number of votes cast in the Democratic primary is between 2000 and 2500. In general elections the top figure has been about 300 votes. Who but the politicians and a few ward heelers are going to bother going to the polls a second time? By voting in the primary they pledge themselves to support Democratic candidates 100 percent, anyway. In Louisiana, in 1936, some 540,370 ballots were cast in the primary for congressmen, as against 329,685 in the general election. The 1938 primaries in Texas brought out 34.5 percent of the adults. The general election attracted only 15 percent.
6. These examples are not the best ones to illustrate the point, probably, but they happened to be the only ones I could get. The unwillingness of party officials to give out total figures for state primaries is in no small measure to blame for the misinformation spread by many people about the extent of restrictions on southern suffrage.
7. One has a right to question, however, whether being forced to exercise political choice within the bounds of a single party can fairly be called "free suffrage." The Supreme court has ruled that a political party is a "voluntary association," free to make such rules as its officers see fit. Thus, the Democratic Party it has been ruled, is within its legal rights when, by barring Negroes from its primaries, it virtually disfranchises 31 percent of the South's population. In many places, the party rivets itself in power by requiring that everyone who participates in the primary pledge himself to support none but Democrats in the general election. For a generation, in eleven southern states the Democratic Party has been governed by laws applying specifically to the party primary; and in several of them the expenses of the primary are borne by the state. Considering these facts, the ruling of the Supreme Court that a political party "has no official status," seems a little strained.

North Carolina

8. IN ONE RESPECT, DIXIE'S ONE party system has an advantage over those existing in other parts of the country, especially over those in such places as Vermont, Boston and up-state New York, where one party has complete control and yet has no genuine primary. In New York's last gubernatorial election, for instance, the voter chose

between Lehman and Dewey. All other candidate were eliminated in the party convention. The average voter knew precious little about them. In North Carolina's last gubernatorial voters chose among five candidates. Later, there was a second "run-off" vote between the two most popular. Even though North Carolina's general election following this was a formality, in which of the states did the ordinary voter have a better chance to name his man?

9. In most southern states it is relatively easy for the ordinary person to enter politics. His name appears on the ballot just as does the nominee of the "court house ring" and, on the face of it, he has just as much chance of getting elected. It is a custom in many places for a young lawyer to run for the legislature as a way of getting known.
10. For the past twenty-odd years North Carolina has had at least two strong candidates, two clearly defined platforms, and a fairly close contest in every gubernatorial election. A "machine" candidate battled an "anti-machine" candidate, with as many as half a dozen also-rans on the ticket. This state has, save for Kentucky, the best numerical voting record of any state in the South. (Poll tax payment is not a prerequisite for voting.) So far so good. Now watch the advantages of this one party system disappear
11. Consider the campaign of 1936. A young college professor, Dr. Ralph McDonald, personable, with an excellent record behind him as a member of the legislature, was the "anti-machine" candidate. His fight for education had won for him the "school vote" and his fight against the sales tax gave him the support of a powerful merchants' association, the backing of the trade unions, and the good will of the common people generally. The "machine" candidate (now governor) was the silver-tongued orator and famed Sunday School teacher, Clyde Ring Hoey. In the first primary less than 4000 votes separated Hoey and McDonald. In the second ("run-off") primary, Hoey received a substantial majority, though it was desperately clear the majority of North Carolinians were favor of the issues McDonald championed.
12. Reasons for McDonald's defeat: the primary came in July, when the school teachers (McDonald's most active supporters) were away from their working communities. His volunteer forces, worn out by the long campaign, were halfhearted on the final day. The old regulars were, as usual, on the job.
13. Reason No. 2 for defeat is a little more sinister than summer vacations, and it illustrates another, and perhap the greatest, weakness of the South's one party system. More absentee ballots were cast in this election than ever re in the state's history. To justify such large votes as were reported in some counties where the machine had control, every adult would have had to come to the polls. An independent study of absentee ballots, made just after the election, revealed that over half those casting absentee ballots were not away from the county on election day. Some ballots were cast in the places where the voters were toyed, with the officiating notaries employee of the establishment. In a number of cases the voter had marked his own ticket. A few confessed they did not know for whom their ballot had been cast.
14. The invalidity of these ballots was confirmed by the county election board, but this

same body ruled that, because the election had already been pronounced legal by state election board, relief was not possible.

15. North Carolina's election board is made up in the customary manner: two minority (Republicans) and three majority representatives (Democrats). If the contest had Republican vs. Democrat, some chance for justice would have been possible. As it was, the McDonald people faced a completely hostile board.
16. To be sure, before the next election the North CaroDemocrats did some. voluntary housecleaning. As of its spokesmen frankly stated: "If we don't do thing, the people of Norrh Carolina will never trust Democratic Party again!" law was passed doing away with absentee ballots and other important election evils. (It applies only to primaries, though. Old tricks still go against the Republicans.) It banned the practice of allowing "markers" to accompany voters into the polling booths to "assist" them in indicating their choices. Under the guise of the old law, election officers permitted markers (paid by the party, or a candidate) or a single member of a household to secure, mark, and cast ballots for every member of a family—from grandfather to granddaughter and all the in-laws. As first amended in 1939, this law allowed "markers" to assist only physically incapables or illiterates (the state constitution calls for a literacy test for voters) and to assist only one voter in each election. After the public had rejoiced over this victory for honesty, a rider was attached saying that election officials might act as "markers" upon the contention that kinsmen are not available. This new election law, with all its loopholes, is to be enforced by the same kind of election board that functioned before.
17. Most southern states still tolerate fraudulent practices of which Norrh Carolina has, in part, rid herself. (So do many northern states. What about your own?)
18. I have picked North Carolina for scrutiny not only because it is my home state, but because North Carolina has a record for efficient, progressive government of which we Tar Heels can be proud. In consumer protection measures, in public health, in highway construction and in schools, it has led the South. Although its Negroes have almost no voice, about half of the total number of adults do vote in both the primary and general elections.
19. Despite all this, North Carolina has been lumped together with the rest of the Solid South as a "sure thing" for the Democratic Party. (When it, along with six other southern states, gave Hoover a majority over Al Smith in 1928, the other Democratic candidates of that year got the usual solid support.) This means that North Carolina has little chance of ever making a favorite son President.
20. Casual attention given to its wishes when the dickering over political rewards goes on is the best it can hope for when the Democrats are in power. When they are not, North Carolina can be sure the Republicans aren't going to waste perfectly good favors trying to win her over.

How It Happened

21. SOUTHERN PEOPLE ARE NOT, BY NATURE, THE KIND OF DOCILE creatures this fixed political control would lead one to think they are. Before 1860 there was no "Solid South." In southern legislatures the country's leading statesmen—Jackson, Jefferson, Calhounsharpened their wits in classic debate. No greater proof of the individual vigor of southerners can be offered than the conduct of the Confederate war itself.
22. The war liquidated intelligent leadership, especially among the young. Added to this came new social concepts, forced upon a stunned and exhausted people, not to be adopted but to be submitted to. The federal government's insistence on eliminating from politics all those who had taken part in the war removed those to whom the people would naturally look for political leadership. Two new groups replaced them: the Negroes, who, with some outstanding exceptions, were ignorant, docile, bewildered, and duped by men of evil ("carpetbaggers" so-called, and all assumed to be northern), or harassed and pummeled by reformers (really from the North, and the more despised); the small farmers, mountain folk, laborers—a group one might loosely designate as "the disinherited"—and their new leaders, known best as "scalawags."
23. Swindlers profited from the blunders of the new governing groups. The old leaders just stood by. Disfranchised, they could not depose these newcomers, nor could they restore what they deemed "righteousness" except by the white hood, the fiery cross, tar and the noose. And with these the business was done. A dozen years after Appomattox, every state had sent its "carpetbaggers" scurrying North and its "scalawags" underground. The reformers had retired to Boston to write memoirs for the Atlantic Monthly. The Negro was frightened, beaten, or just naturally dropped into political submission. And while the South was catching its breath, the same men of violence who had brought these things about bound themselves with ropes of hate into the political system.
24. NEITHER THE NEGRO NOR THE DISINHERITED WAS PUT OUT OF politics completely at this time; only their leaders were frightened and their ranks split. Few of those now forgotten individuals, Negro and white, who, during the reconstruction days, had put into law and practice measures that even today would be called progressive, were permitted to remain. Negroes did sit in legislatures; they held minor offices; some even went to Congress. But nearly everywhere they were pawns. In some places they were allowed in politics just enough to make the threats of those leaders of the Democratic Party who held their place by "waving the bloody shirt of black domination" seem real. In other places, they were bribed, swindled or herded into the polls (as the situation called for) to vote down the candidates for the disinherited. Scarcely a trick was missed in this system of control until 1890.
25. Leaders again arose among the small farmers in the hills, among the artisans and among those unhappy children of the war, the white sharecroppers. The South as well as the West was suffering from raids by the "robber barons." Then, much as Methodism swept through the South a half century before, the movement generally referred to as "Populism" took hold: "subtreasury," "federal control of railways," "free coinage of silver"—all the rest. Often evangelical meetings turned into political ones;

not a few of the movement's incendiary leaders were pulpit men. The men in power ignored the meaning of this new gospel. When the people were calling for the bread of action, they were given the stone of threatened Negro domination. And for a while, this worked.

26. The panic deepened. In a desperate effort to get something done, the disinherited made common cause with Negroes and "scalawag" Republicans to form the "People's Party." The fight was on. From 1890 until some time after 1900 every southern state suffered such political and social upheaval as can be accurately described only by using the southern historian's own terminology. They call it "second reconstruction." Every form of fraud, intimidation and chicanery imaginable was used on both sides. In some places, notably in Georgia and North Carolina the Populists did get into power. They were politically too inexperienced, however, and too poorly organized or too much split among themselves over the race question to operate effectively under Democratic harassment. In other states, the Populist minority was so large that efficient administration by the Democrats was impossible. All this time the South was going through an exhausting economic depression. I
27. As the depression lifted in the 1900s, Populist leaders were lured off into never-never land by crackpot greenback plans. The rank and file were too discouraged to continue the fight. In every state the Democrats got their old control again. This time, they were determined that no such ten years of politics as the South had suffered should ever occur again.

Take the Negro Out of Politics

28. TAKE THE NEGRO OUT OF POLITICS, WAS THE FIRST NECESSITY, the southern Democrats agreed. A majority of southern people, including the Populists, agreed with them. How could this be done within the framework of the fifteenth amendment? A whole set of complicated election qualifications and restrictions provided the answer. Literacy tests came first. The majority of the Negroes could be honestly eliminated in this way. But what of the approximately 33 percent of the whites who were at that time illiterate? For these the famous "grandfather clauses" were written, allowing illiterates to vote whose grandfathers had voted in the elections of 1860. Since then, the Democratic white primary, forbidding Negroes membership in the party and thus barring them from the only significant election—combined with twisted interpretations of the literacy tests, and, when necessary, frank intimidation—has deprived all but a handful of Negroes of a vote in the South.
29. In some states, notably in North Carolina and Virginia, the "second reconstruction" acted as a kind of purge for the Democratic Party itself, putting young men into power. Josephus Daniels, Carter Glass and Josiah Bailey got their first political experience in this atmosphere. Garner, Bankhead, Pat Harrison and "Cotton Ed" Smith cut their political eyeteeth during the writing of these disfranchisement laws.
30. AMONG THE SUFFRAGE RESTRICTIONS PUT FORWARD AT THIS time was the requirement of poll tax payment as a prerequisite for voting. This, too, was suggested originally as a safeguard against Negro voting, and was put across as such

in the special constitutional conventions called to revise election laws. Looking back on it now, however, one might wonder whether or not the creators of this extra safeguard did not have another group of voters in mind, too. As Barry Gingham, publisher of the *Louisville Courier-Journal and Times*, suggested in a speech before the Human Relations Institute in Chapel Hill, N.C., on the subject:

31. *Wasn't it a fear of "radicalism" among the sharecroppers and lower class whites that may have been at least partly responsible for poll tax legislation . . . riding into Troy in the wooden horse of protection of white supremacy? At any rate, it has been estimated that as many as 64 percent of trite adult voters have been disfranchised in the poll tax and in every one of these states more whites than Negroes are barred from the ballot box by the tax.*
32. This possibility did not go unnoticed at the time. In state the white supremacy conventions were stormy affairs. No man, for fear of being labeled "nigger lover," dared lift his voice in protest against Negro disfranchisement, but many did prophesy that a poll tax of as little as \$1.50 would mean a voteless poor white class, too. Charles Edwards, in a paper read to the Southern Conference for Human Welfare in Birmingham, Ala., last year [see *Survey Graphic*, January 1940], quoted a member of state's convention of 1901 as saying:
 33. *A great many people all over white counties do not have \$1.50 at the end of the year, but come out in debt. There are white men in this country who, rather than pay \$1.50, would surrender their vote. You say as much as please that they are not patriotic, but I say they are.*
34. Virginia's white supremacy convention lasted a year and fourteen days. The constitutional amendment it produced was r given a popular reference, although the margin of majority in the vote to call this vention was only 17,000. Summarizing the words of the convention speaker, elected on opening day, Dr. Ray Doudean of the University of Richmond Law School; wrote in *Richmond Times-Dispatch*:
 35. *The obvious purpose of the convention would be to limit the right of suffrage in every possible way so that illiterates and persons who did not help bear the financial burdens of the government, white and negro, would be disqualified from voting.*
 36. *[quoting from the speaker directly] The right of suffrage is not a natural right. It is a social right, and necessarily must be regulated by society.*

And the Results?

37. DRAWING OUR INFORMATION FROM ARTICLES IN *The Southern Planter*, we see that in 1896 some 295,000 men voted in the presidential election in Virginia, or 64 percent of the electorate. In 1904, after the suffrage amendments were put in force, the total dropped to 130,000. The vote for Virginia's own Woodrow Wilson added to that of his opponent totaled, in 1912, only 136,000. In 1936, the total polled in the general election was 334,590. The population during these four years had increased 34 percent. The largest number of votes ever cast in a Democratic primary (1936) was

477,151—this number out of a total adult population of 2,671,000. Since only a fourth of these are Negroes (it was 36 percent in 1896), the maximum; points, comes to 43 percent.

38. Some 125,000 Negroes were registered voters in Louisiana in 1896, before her "white supremacy" convention met. Four years later, after the new laws had gone into operation, the total was about 5000.
39. CHARLES EDWARDS MAKES AN INTERESTING COMPARISON Between Alabama's election system and the situation in England a century and a quarter ago. Unlike the English experience, where "freedom slowly broadens down from precedent to precedent," Alabama's experience since 1901, as indeed the experience of the whole South, has been in reverse. Delayed reapportionment has created "rotten borough counties" in the southern black belt. They dominate the legislature. In 1901, ten such counties were accorded 20 representatives and 8 senators; despite the fact that the total population has declined 19 percent in the last thirty-seven years, no change has been made. Eight northern Alabama counties with equal population in 1901 were allowed at the time 18 representatives and 5 senators; here the population has increased nearly 150 percent, with no increase in representation. Thus the political strength of northern Alabama, with Birmingham, the industrial and mining section, and the hill counties well populated by small and generally progressive farmers, is effectively checked.
40. The situation in Georgia is, if anything, more extreme. The state has 159 counties—more than any other state except Texas—each almost completely independent. There is no state audit; no report of county finances is required. The Georgia Fact Finding Committee [see Survey Graphic, March 1939] points out in one of its reports:
41. *" . . . it is apparent that the small rural counties, receiving from the state from 2 to 8 times as much as they pay into the Treasury, with population and taxable wealth and area below what is regarded as the minimum requirements, completely dominate the legislature. Fulton, the largest county . . . has 335,200; Echols, the smallest, has a . . . population of 2744. Fulton has three representatives, or one for each 111,740, while Echols has one for 2744. . . . The disparity between the large and small counties is shockingly undemocratic."*
42. Added to this, Georgia has a county unit system of state elections. "Under this system," the Fact Finding Committee explains, "in the election of the governor, U. S. Senators, state house officers, and judges of the supreme court and court of appeals, each county is entitled to as many votes in the state convention as it has representatives in the lower house.... A governor, receiving a majority of one in a county, is entitled to the entire vote of that county. Therefore, the majority vote in the small counties elects governor, senators and other officials. It is much easier under ordinary circumstances to carry three small counties [and much cheaper than it is one large one, and therefore candidates devote most of their attention to these small counties...."
43. This is how a few thousand dollars, paid out over a period of years in a handful of

rural Georgia counties, can elect and reelect a congressman until this man has, through seniority, climbed up into the chairmanship of an important committee and can block a legislative program designed for America's 130 million people.

44. By a similar control of counties with small populations, the Byrd-Glass Virginia machine swings a solid and often controlling block of votes in the legislature. The machine staunchly defends the poll tax. Boss Crump, in Tennessee, also likes the poll tax.

Some Negroes Do Vote

45. TALKING ABOUT CRUMP, RIGHT HERE MIGHT BE A GOOD PLACE to summarize what little part Negroes, who are 31 percent of the South's population, do play in politics. I do so, not because of its present importance, but as an indication of what might happen in the next few years. Besides their great migration out of the South, the Negro people have been making a second mass movement from the country to the South's growing cities. Here they live in sections apart, kept there by inclination reinforced by strict zoning ordinances. Not living scattered among the white people, as in rural districts, they develop their own leadership in the cities. They are also many times more susceptible to group exploitation.
46. In Memphis, the Crump machine marches Negroes to the polls. Guests from Arkansas—just across the river—have been seen in these election-day lines, too. In a desperate effort to out-vote Crump, Democrats in Nashville and Chattanooga have relaxed their white primary rules. With the eastern half of the state traditionally Republican, the Negro now has a much easier time getting a vote in Tennessee than in any other part of the South save Kentucky. A Negro, Charles W. Anderson, Jr., thirty-two years old and a graduate of Howard, has just been reelected to the Kentucky legislature where he has made an excellent record. Since Kentucky, Negro population is less than 8 percent of her total, however, this exception is of little significance.
47. Now that they have the vote, the large sections of Negroes in Nashville and Chattanooga are demanding small concessions in return for their party obedience. They receive representation on the police force, better streets than the former in their residential sections, more equal treatment as regards sanitation and health facilities.
48. IN CENTRAL TEXAS, WHERE THE NUMBER OF NEGROES is small and where they have formed a class of artisans between the poor whites and the Mexicans, they are accorded a void in local affairs. A larger percentage of Negroes in San Antonio vote than of whites. Though Negroes form only 1 percent of the total population, one of their race, a sportsman-gambler named Bellinger was for two decades the city's most powerful political figure.
49. In southeastern Texas, however, in the second congressional district (along the Gulf and the Louisiana border) which sent Martin Dies to Congress, Negroes make up over a quarter of the population, and are as much out of the political picture as they are in the Delta country of Mississippi. Only about 73,000—a liberal estimate—of this district's 304,000 people are able to vote in any election. In other words, the

Americanism Martin Dies represents is a democracy of something like 35 percent!

50. In other southern states a whole bag of special tricks prevents the Negro from voting. Most important is the literacy test, which is seldom enforced against white people. Electors are required to "read, write and explain," any passage of the state constitution chosen by the registrar, who is the sole and final judge. Many Negro college professors have been denied the ballot under such procedure. There are other hurdles for the Negro would-be voter. He may find himself in a line of people waiting to register—a line that never moves. Often this registrar tells him to go out and find some white man who will "vouch" for him. This leaves the door open for registration of willing "Uncle Toms," who hang around the political clubs and court houses. If all this fails to discourage, then intimidation often begins. As a result, the average Negro concludes: "What is the use of starting I trouble just to cast a vote in a meaningless election?"

City Negroes

51. NOW COMES THE STRANGE NEW SITUATION or THE Negroes place in municipal elections. For many years, from two to five thousand Negroes have voted in Atlanta city elections. Relatively large numbers of them have cast ballots, too, in Durham and Raleigh, N.C., and in Richmond, Va., with out more than a ripple of protest. Yet, when one thousand Negroes registered in the last Miami city election (never more than fifty had voted before), the Ku Klux Klan rode through the Negro section of town with flaming cross threatening to lynch any Negro who might vote. In Sparta burg, S.C., when sixty-one Negroes, mostly women, registered this summer for that city's general election newspapers throughout that section of the state wrote excited editorials and the KKK sent out a warning: "The Klan will ride again!"
52. Note the difference: in the first group of cities—Atlanta Durham, Raleigh, Richmond—the Negroes were introduced to the ballot by the regular city political machines, which needed them when contests had become close. In the last two cities—Miami and Spartanburg—Negroes themselves organized the registration movements.
53. Even in those places where the Negro vote has been brought about purely for machine purposes, however, some direct benefits in the form of streets, garbage collection, etc., have resulted. Despite the fact that the Miami vote was an independent one (or, more properly, because of it) direct improvements in city services were seen almost immediately. Encouraged by this, similar Negro-inspired movements to register are going on in Winston-Salem, Greensboro, New Orleans, Little Rock, and—most successfully of all—in Birmingham, Ala., where, it has been reported, over 3000 new Negro names are on the registration books.
54. Unless the Negro is permitted to take part in the Democratic primary, however, all this will mean very little. The hope that within his ranks rests a great source of liberal votes is, at present, as fruitless as the threat of black domination is false. The strongest argument for uniform suffrage for Negroes and whites is the same as that for poll tax elimination—so long as the "court house gang" can determine which Negroes are to be given the vote and how many, they, too, are "on tap," and may be used by the

corruptors to keep themselves in power.

55. CAN THE NEGRO LEARN HOW TO VOTE INTELLIGENTLY, Anyway?" This is a question that many southerners ask in all seriousness. The most satisfactory answer yet found is the part the Negro is playing in AAA crop control elections, conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (To non-southerners this illustration will demonstrate what natives mean and do not mean, by "social equality.") In Bolivar County, Mississippi, the department shows, there are 13,000 farm operators, of whom only 2443 are white. Some 8196 votes were cast in the last AAA election. Similar figures for every county in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and Arkansas where there are more Negroes than white operators bear out the same point: Negroes are taking an important part in these elections.
56. There has not been a single instance known to the department of white people objecting to the part Negroes are taking in these elections. No requests for separate polling places, and so forth, have come in. On a vote on a purely economic question a department worker from Alabama explains, there is no objection. A. D. Stewart of the Mississippi Cooperative Cotton Association, shows a less happy side. No objections are raised he said, since a large percentage of the producers of whatever color must ratify crop control agreements before they go into effect.
57. Despite Mr. Stewart's less hopeful view, we might ask: "What will happen when these same farmers begin to see their vote for governor and for state officers in the same economic light?" Or again: "How long will the Negroes be content with voting for AAA programs only, and stand by while the whites are cajoled into electing men to office who can wreck a larger program of which the agricultural section is but a part?"
58. In any event, these AAA elections are acting as an excellent proving ground for the Negro as a voter.

Other Hopes

59. WHEN THE TWO THIRDS RULE FOR NOMINATION FOR PRESIDENT was repealed in the 1936 Democratic convention, a "sugar treat" was handed the pouting southern delegates in the form of a recommendation to the National Democratic Committee that some method be worked out whereby the states voting heavily Democratic might get a "bonus" in representation. Not until they got home did the southern delegates realize that the pacifying offer was poisoned. If representation at the national convention was based, as was recommended upon the number of Democratic voices cast, instead of on the number of congressional representatives the state has, as is the present practice, the South's voice would be reduced to a whisper.
60. Barry Gingham underlined this when he showed that the total vote cast in the eight poll tax states for Roosevelt in the general election of 1936 was only 2,457,000, just a few thousand more than the Democratic vote alone cast in the single state of Pennsylvania. Suffrage reformists were jubilant. Many articles were written telling the political bosses they must allow more people to vote or be guilty of "betraying" the

South by weakening its voice in the national convention. But the proposal was only in the form of a recommendation. As one important party official put it, "Unless the South pushes it, the committee will forget all about it."

And in 1940

61. NOW TO THAT MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION: WHAT HAS all this got to do with 1940's election?"
62. The answer is: "Not much."
63. Delegates to the Democratic National Convention from all southern states save Alabama, Georgia and Florida will be hand-picked by county committeemen who were elected in 1933. In every state, under some guise or other, there has been a bitter fight between factions loosely labelled "New Deal" and "anti-New Deal." Spring party conventions will show which factions win out, or what kind of compromise has been arranged. In Alabama, the New Dealers are trying to get control by promoting Speaker Bankhead as a favorite son, and the opposition is trying to thwart this attempt by asking for an uninstructed delegation. In Mississippi the issue was pretty clearly settled last spring, when Bilbo's candidate, Johnson, won the governorship over anti-administration Harrison's man. And so it goes.
64. Actually, then, the South's action in 1940 will not be determined by a free people's vote on issues. Rather, it will be a dog fight between the old liners—with their stacks of poll tax receipts, or their blocks of locally controlled voters and the pro New Deal men, with their thousands of relief recipients and other direct beneficiaries. The fact that an admittedly anti-Negro, anti-labor man like Bilbo is the uncontested champion of the New Deal for one whole state only goes to underline the irony of the situation.
65. Meanwhile, the vast majority of southern people are helpless to participate in any political program that may help to restore the South to its place in the nation. Southern congressmen insist that their own constituents receive lower pay on WPA than those in other states. Southern governors demand the elimination of freight differentials against the South and, in the same breath, demand that differentials be allowed in the wages and hours standards.
66. In the North and East the word "southerner" and the word "reactionary" are, in political conversation, used almost interchangeably. Yet, being the most underprivileged section, the South should normally be the most radical. Its problems are in many ways identical with those of the West; yet look at the differences in voting percentages, and in representation.
67. I heard Congressman Dickstein making political capital of this general misunderstanding of the South last winter when he explained to a group of unemployed on New York's East Side why a relief bill was defeated.
68. "It's the southerners in Congress who are responsible for you being hungry," the congressman said, "it's those reactionary southerners." As a rather sensitive son of the

South I confess I had a difficult time restraining a yell of protest:

69. "Don't blame all of the southerners, Mr. Dickstein. Remember, two thirds of us weren't even asked!"