

1966

Alabama Democratic Conference To Meet In Montgomery Oct. 8-9

The Tuskegee News

The Alabama Democratic Conference will hold its semi-annual meeting in Montgomery at the Jefferson Davis Hotel and the Municipal Auditorium on Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 8 and 9. 1966

Features of the two-day meeting will be a message by the chairman of the Alabama State Democratic Executive Committee, Robert S. Vance of Birmingham, scheduled for 3:00 p.m. Sunday at the Municipal Auditorium. At the same session there will be presented to the audience the Negro citizens who are holding positions in city and county governments in Alabama.

The business session of the conference will be held between 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. in the same auditorium.

On Saturday afternoon, Oct. 8, at the Jefferson Davis Hotel, between 2:00 and 4:30 o'clock, there will be two workshops dealing with such matters as "The Structure and Functioning of Democratic State and County Executive Committees," "Developing, Organizing, and Executing a Program of Political Education," "Financing County Democratic Groups, and the Alabama Democratic Conference," "How to Organize Democrats on County, Municipal, and Precinct Levels," and "The Roles and Problems of Negro Municipal and County Office-Holders in Alabama."

At 7:30 p.m., at the hotel, there will be a banquet session.

Participating in the two-day conference will be representatives and officials of the State

Conference and of county and municipal groups. Rufus A. Lewis of Montgomery is the chairman of the State Conference.

1966

While The Storm Was Going On . . .

LIGHTNING FLASHED and thunder rolled in Montgomery on Sunday afternoon, and it was a fitting background to a most remarkable event that was taking place.

The occasion was a meeting of the Alabama Democratic Conference, Inc.—the most effective political organization among Negroes in the state, the organization which had delivered most of the 172,386 votes that Richmond Flowers received in the May primary.

Heretofore Richmond Flowers had been the only political figure of statewide stature who had spoken before the group. But, Sunday for the first time in the state's history, the chairman of the State Democratic Executive Committee would speak to a Negro audience.

There he sat on the speaker's platform—Robert Vance, the top official in Alabama of the party of Lyndon Johnson and the party of George Wallace, the party of Richmond Flowers and the party of Lester Maddox.

Arthur D. Shores, Negro attorney and veteran of so many civil rights battles in courts, introduced the youthful and handsome chairman, and the group gave him a standing ovation as he came to the rostrum.

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CHAIRMAN VANCE started out with a standard joke, ever so slightly risqué. Then he made his single allusion to the uniqueness of the occasion. When the newspapers reported he would speak to this group, the reporters had called him to see what he would talk about. "I told them I would talk about the same thing that I always talk about," mused Vance. "The time has passed when you take one message to one group of people and another message to another group of people."

At this the group burst into spontaneous applause and uttered little expressions of approval like "that's right!" and "you said it."

Then Vance fell into a ruminative mood about the Democratic Party being the party of progressives and the Republican Party being the party of reactionaries. He resurrected a term not often heard these days as he accused the Republicans of representing "the special interests of its big mule bosses."

And then, without batting an eye, right then and there, he came right out and asked those people to vote for Lurleen



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By
Ray
Jenkins

Wallace. To be sure, the act was done with great discretion. Never once did he mention the distressing name; he just went on and on listing the accomplishments of "our present Democratic Administration in Alabama"—the free textbooks, the highway program which had been carried out "without one hint of graft or corruption," the trade school and junior college program which "will take the less fortunate Alabama children out of the low-paying jobs, out of the dirt and ditches, and equip them for life of hope and accomplishment."

And in Washington, Alabama Democrats were waging the same kind of fight at the Federal level—all just one big happy family working "to build a better Alabama."

"I suppose we will always have differences," he conceded. "We have them today. But the challenge that confronts us is so important and so demanding that we cannot allow differences to divide us."

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AND WHEN IT WAS over, and the applause died down, Peter Hall, the witty and scholarly chairman of the day, chose his remarks with discretion that matched Vance's. "We all know what Mr. Vance is saying," said Hall, "and I think he understands our problem." But then Hall went on that, after all, this is "a family fight, but it is out of such fights that families can become great." It was reasonable to assume that Hall was giving the stamp of approval of Vance's message.

The meeting closed on a happy note, with Conference Chairman Rufus Lewis presenting some impressive scrolls to a dozen or so members who had been especially active in recent months in the political affairs of the organization. If they heed the advice of their leaders, these people are in for some strange politicking during the next four weeks.