

SOUTHERN DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE

A. T. WALDEN, Chairman
28 Butler Street, N. E.
Atlanta 3, Georgia

September 22, 1962

**To the Officers and Members of the Southern
Democratic Conference:**

Gentlemen:

I am happy to greet you after a few weeks separation, time having so rapidly passed since we assembled in Atlanta.

I have given considerable thought and reflection to the matters we discussed at our first meeting and have considered means and methods of implementing the conclusions at which we arrived at that time.

One of the matters which shall claim our attention at this meeting is the consideration of the Constitution and By-laws which a special committee was directed to draft and have ready for presentation at this meeting. I am happy to report that a tentative draft has been prepared and will be presented for our consideration.

2. Another matter which claims our attention and which we discussed at length is that of taking the necessary steps to become integrated into the legal structure of the party in the various states in which we reside. I have asked the vice-president of the organization from the state of Georgia, Attorney Leroy Johnson, to make a brief report upon that matter as far as it affects that state, presumably representatives from other states may be prepared to make a like report.

Upon the issue above referred to, it is quite probable that before it shall become necessary to carry the matter before the Democratic National Committee, that it will have been pretty largely resolved in most areas. However, I think that it would be wise that we take steps. I shall make a recommendation later relative to that matter.

3. It has been my observation that we have a long way to go in the political education of our people and it is necessary that some affirmative steps be taken in that direction. A specific recommendation will be made.

4. With the rapid extension of the privileges of the ballot in the Southern area, Negro democrats will be able to play an increasingly important part in the affairs of the party, both local and national, and steps should be taken to highlight that importance in the eyes of the people of the region as well as the party officials, both local and national, and specifically steps should be taken in that direction.

5. Since we are rightly seeking and expecting to enjoy all of the privileges incident to our support of and connection with the Democratic Party, it is incumbent that we begin to bear our proper share of the responsibility for the financial support of the party, particularly from a national standpoint.

In the light of the foregoing observations, your chairman makes the following recommendations for your consideration.

1. In order that the party may know that we are willing to bear our share of responsibility for the financial support of its objectives, I recommend that we suggest to the state member organizations represented in our conference that each state will pledge to the National Committee to be responsible for securing a minimum of three hundred sustaining memberships for the Democratic National Committee each year beginning with the year 1963.

2. That a special committee be appointed, ^{charged} ~~chaired~~ with the responsibility of drafting the proper approach to be followed in presenting to the National Committee, if necessary, the matter of the lack of Negro representation in the state machinery of the party and at the National Convention. Your chairman is in intimate contact with the greatest party parliamentary expert in that field who would gladly collaborate and cooperate with us in the preparation of the issue for the resolution at the next party convention.

3. That because of the crying necessity for more political education among our people, your chairman recommends that each state shall formulate a plan or program for citizenship education for the people in order that they might more effectively participate in the political affairs of the party. It would be possible to draw upon the resources available among the political science teachers in the schools and colleges throughout the area. Due to the difference in the law and the applicable political regulations to the matter, special courses would have to be prepared in the light of the law prevailing in each particular state.

More than twenty years ago, your chairman organized and set up the first school of citizenship in the South in Atlanta, writing the curriculum, securing the faculty and supervising the operation. More than 4,000 were granted certificates of attendance after six weeks courses and they highly cherish them to this very day.

4. One of the things we could do which would bear bountiful fruit and be of immense benefit to us, if we would in the South at a central place in the region, perhaps Atlanta, plan next Spring for a Southwide banquet with representatives from the entire region at which we would request the Attorney General of the United States to be the principal speaker. We could assemble one thousand people there who would be willing to pay \$25.00 a plate. Such an event would be of historical significance and it would point to the emerging Negro in democratic politics stimulating the masses for future political participation, increase the respect of our neighbors and enable us to render a greater service to our party. I believe if we start in time it would be possible to get the Attorney General to be the principal speaker. I recommend this for your careful consideration.

Your chairman has no monopoly on suggestions for our progress but did deem it necessary to give some thought to some course which might be followed which would be of benefit in helping us to reach the goals for which the organization was founded.

As to the matter of registration and voting, it is difficult to emphasize the absolute necessity that there should be an intensification of efforts in that direction for the simple reason that therein lies the pathway to full social, economic and political salvation for our minority group. However, I shall not comment further upon that question but wish to refer you to the very splendid report made by a committee to which this question was assigned, headed by Mr. John McCray. This committee has given the matter a most thorough and painstaking consideration and I commend it to your consideration and discussion. With thanks to the committee for the excellent suggestions contained in its report.

Respectfully yours,

A. T. WALDEN, Chairman
SOUTHERN DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE

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