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Correspondence, John C. Stennis, March 13, 1948

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MR. STENNIS-

This ought to be good information in any fight on the poll tax, but no one I have submitted it to in the past has ever, apparently, done so. This was put together a few years ago while residing there in DC.

We do not have the tax any more in Florida, but I am opposed on principle, just as with the other things lately being thrust upon us.


Reddick, Florida

MAR 13 1948

Memorandum on the matter of POLL TAXES ---- NOT in the southeastern states

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A letter from the Deputy Secretary of State, RHODE ISLAND, dated March 5, 1940, stated that:

"Under Rhode Island law the payment of poll tax is not a pre-requisite for voting."

However, Hon. Theodore F. Green, a member of the U. S. Senate from Rhode Island, has furnished a copy of the full text of the Rhode Island laws, Chapters 34 and 35, regarding taxes in that state and we find the following language in Chapter 34:

"The assessors of taxes of each town and city shall, on the date for the annual assessment of town and city taxes therein, respectively, assess against every person in said town or city, who, if registered, would be qualified to vote, a tax of \$1.00, or so much thereof as, with other taxes, shall amount to \$1.00.

"The assessors of taxes of each town and city shall, on the date for the annual assessment of town and city taxes therein, respectively, also assess a tax of \$1.00, or so much thereof as with other taxes shall amount to \$1.00, against every person, male or female, in said town or city of the age of 21 years or over, whether or not a citizen of the United States, who has had residence in said town or city for 6 months next preceding such assessment. (P.L., 1922, Ch. 2201)"

It will be noted that the law here specifically assesses a poll tax against the very persons about whom certain individuals are so solicitous - the poorer ones - because it definitely provides that unless a tax of \$1.00 or more is assessed as a property tax then the poll tax must apply.

Note also the provision for a "head tax". The southern states have not been charged with that, so far.

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A letter from the Deputy Secretary of State, NEW HAMPSHIRE, dated March 1, 1940, states:

"While we do have a poll tax rate of two dollars we do not find that the statute specifically states that it is a pre-requisite to voting, although it is when it comes to obtaining a hunting or fishing license, or an automobile license."

Well, they seem to get them. Even our poorer classes manage to require an automobile license. More of them want auto licenses than want to vote.

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A letter from Hon. H. C. Lodge, Jr., Senator from MASSACHUSETTS, dated Feb. 27, 1940, says:

"Under Massachusetts law, every male citizen is supposed to pay a poll tax of \$2. per year, and it is necessary to show that such a tax has been assessed in order to be eligible to register for voting purposes."

It will be noted that Mr. Lodge said that a poll tax must be ASSESSED. That the poll tax must also be PAID is indicated in a letter dated March 31, 1941, from which the following is quoted:

"However, as of March 28, 1941, I have in person taken steps to reestablish my residence at Somerville, Middlesex County, Massachusetts. After payment of poll tax and registration after June 15, 1941 I shall again be entered on the list of bona fide residents and eligible voters in the State of Massachusetts."

This person was establishing residence for Civil Service purposes.

There you are Folks!

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