

## 6009 – Effect of Civil Rights on Presidential Election

Guest: Senator Herman Talmadge (D-GA)

Morphew: introduction...with all of the pressure on the subject of civil rights, do you think that it will have some effect on the southern political trend regarding the presidential election?

Talmadge: Dick, I think it's entirely possible. All of the principle prospective candidates for the Democratic and Republican nomination are strong advocates of more civil rights and it has conclusively proved that in the position of both the great parties in the Congress, it's conclusively proved to all of the southern states that they're not going to get any sympathy for their position from elements of the party outside of the South. And we must, as I see it, have some degree of political strength to restore our effectiveness in the nation. They have sold out the South for the radical bloc voters in the big cities of other states in the Union where they have more electoral votes. That's just the long and short of it.

Morphew: do you think the people back home are in the mood for taking any more insults from the northern elements of the party?

Talmadge: The reports that I've had from Georgia and other areas of the South, and I might add other areas of our country, are in a rather bad frame of mind at the present time, they know this effort is just another effort to put the South through a second Reconstruction almost a hundred years following the War Between the States. They know that it's politically motivated and sponsored and they don't like it a bit. Neither do I.

Morphew: a lot of people in the south find it difficult to understand that its perpetual loyalty to the democratic party is being repaid with such insult.

Talmadge: Well, we all find it difficult to understand. It's mere political expediency. New York state has 47 electoral votes, I believe, and there are approximately a million Negroes and Puerto Ricans that vote in New York state and they vote in a bloc and they do whatever they think necessary to get the Negro/Puerto Rican vote in New York. Now, what I've said about New York state is equally applicable to Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia and other areas of our country. They're just making a base, partisan, political appeal of the most flagrant nature to appeal to that particular bloc because they think it'll constitute a balance of power in those particular states and they are selling the South short to get a larger vote.

Morphew: what do you think the south must do to overcome this?

Talmadge: We must create a posture of strength to protect ourselves. The reason we are defenseless at the present time is because we don't constitute an effective political force in the nation to the same degree that the National Association for the Advancement of

Colored People and the Americans for Democratic Action and kindred organizations do. So, what we must do, unless we are to continue being a doormat for both political parties for all time to come, is to get us some political strength and there's only one constitutional way that I see that it can be done. And it was the way that our framers of our constitution meant for it to be done, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and James Madison and all of the giants of American history. When we created the college of electors it provided that, the constitution provided that the legislatures of the respective states would choose the electors in such manner as they may determine. It was the intent of the framers of our constitution that the electors would then be independent agents, use their best judgment to vote for the best qualified men in America for president and vice-president, and George Washington received all of the electoral votes in the first election and I think all of them in the second election as the best qualified president for two terms. And then we started getting into a political party situation, and as we did that, organized minorities became more and more an influence in both parties. And it's gotten to the point now that the tail is wagging the dog and has been wagging the dog for some 25 or 30 years. And unless we stop the tail from wagging the dog, the tail is going to beat the dog to death. So I say as a matter of precautionary defense, if most of the southern states would get their electoral votes in position, where there would be some doubt as to who they're going to be cast for, come November, why these politicians would cease kicking us around as they have been doing for the past good many years in my judgment, Dick, and I would strongly urge every southern state to take a position where they can assume a posture of trend. You know, these troops from neighboring countries don't invade you so badly when you've got troops on the border, when you've got a fleet...they don't attack you so readily, when you've got an air force that you command, they don't move into to destroy you overnight. And the reason they never hesitate to invade the South, to abuse the South, to vilify the South, to castigate the South, make us the whipping boy and the doormat for the nation is to appease these radical elements and because they don't think we have a posture of strength. They say, well, those states voted democratic always, they're going to continue to vote democratic, we know they aren't going to vote republican. We're trying to outdo each other to see who can whip them the most, so they can't vote Republican, therefore, they've got to vote Democratic. We've got them in the bag, let's go to town boys, we'll get that radical vote now. If we could create some doubt about it in the electoral college, I think we could stop some of this foolish legislation we've had to contend with many years in the Congress of the United States.

Morphew: we might point out at this stage that 6 southern states already have a set up providing for independent electors and one or 2 other states are considering it now.

Talmadge: I saw in the morning paper, I believe, where the state of Virginia is considering that action at the very moment. We're going to be confronted with this situation until we have a posture of strength.

Morphew: the reasons these radical groups have been successful is not because of their numbers but because they are organized, wouldn't you say?

Talmadge: They're organized, and then in many areas they constitute the balance of power. You have lots of states where the Republican vote is say, 47 percent and the Democratic vote 48 percent and maybe they have 10 percent of the population and they just shifted back and forth between the two great political parties, they put it up for sale to the highest bidder. We have the Republican party and the Democratic Party in those areas bidding for that pivotal bloc vote just like selling the steer in a livestock sales barn at auction. That's exactly the way it goes.

Morphew: I've heard more demands throughout the south in the past few months for some real southern unity, do you think this is essential for our success?

Talmadge: I certainly do, Dick, and I would hope that our delegates would go to the convention unpledged to anyone, At that time they would meet and work together as a cohesive force, that they would vote for the best qualified man in the convention, that they would review the platform carefully, and that they try to play it on a cold-blooded proposition purely as a matter of self-defense.

Morphew: and if this is done many states will have recess state conventions and decide what to do about pledging the electors...do you feel if this is done the south could be a political force again?

Talmadge: Oh, I certainly do. The south has a great number of electoral votes and in my judgment neither of the two great political parties can win the election this coming November without the southern electors. We have the strength if we will just corral it and use it right, but here to for we've never done it.

Morphew: many times we hear about independent electors and those opposed to it will say this is just another third party idea.

Talmadge: Well, of course, it's not a third party at all and I wouldn't recommend a third party. I think that would be ineffective and futile and wouldn't amount to anything. If we have a group of electors that can constitute a pivotal force in the elections then we can have a summit conference in this country of real significance, Dick, and that's what I'd like to see. Hold a summit conference and say, now let's come to some terms. When are we going to stop knifing the South in the back every year? That's our situation, and these presidential candidates, then, I think, would come to some realization in the fact that we meant business. You know, we moved the troops out of the South in 1876 in the Hayes/Tilden contest but just such strategy. Apparently, we might have to move the troops out of the South by the same strategy again.

Morphew: this southern unity, do you feel it is something just for the present or should we make plans for some permanent organization of political leaders?

Talmadge: Well, I agree with you that political leaders that represent the South, particularly the governors who are the most effective force in the convention situation,

ought to meet regularly and discuss their problems and act in concert. That's the only way you get anything done on a national level.