

Pathfinder

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Georgia: White Man's Land

Willis Smith, a willowy, sharp-tongued lawyer from Carrollton, Ga., jumped up on the floor of the Georgia House of Representatives and screamed: "This is a white man's country and we're going to keep it that way."

Amid the bedlam of approval that followed, the ruling Talmadge forces whipped through "Governor" Herman's White Primary bill, 133 to 62.

Not yet law, the bill will exclude Negroes from voting in any primary election and is so drawn, say proponents, that the Federal Government can't do anything about it.

Opponents say the people of Georgia won't be able to do anything about it either, because the bill would put the state at the mercy of a "private party" and destroy free and honest elections.

It repeals, for example, the uniform, statewide registration law and leaves it up to county party committees to say who shall vote.

It repeals the law giving privacy to the voter while he marks his ballot, and another which says that primary returns must be filed with the Superior courts. Instead they would be handed over to private party officials.

Also repealed would be a law against buying and selling votes.

\$2 Per Vote. To finance this "white party," the Talmadge high command proposes a \$2 party registration fee payable every two years. Such a scheme would pile up a million dollars between primary elections, all of which the party could use as it saw fit. The \$25,000 limit on campaign expenditures would be killed.

It's the same law that "Pa" Gene Talmadge fought for but didn't live to put over. Once it's law, Georgians can't see much difference whether Herman or Lt. Gov. M. E. Thompson wins final court sanction as governor. Thompson's preliminary legal victory is headed for the State Supreme Court, possibly the U.S. Supreme Court. Both claimants campaigned for "white supremacy."

Last Hope. If the bill becomes law, opponents say they'll fight it all the way to the Supreme Court. Only one other state, South Carolina, has passed a similar law. Its Constitutionality is also being contested.

What worries Georgians is that they aren't sure the U.S. Supreme Court can do anything about it. Judge Samuel H. Sibley, a member of the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, who eventually may help decide the case, has said "privately" that states alone have the right to make laws governing primary elections; the U.S. Supreme Court has no jurisdiction.