

TIME

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THIRD PARTIES: Eggs in the Dust

In his assault on the South last week, Henry Wallace acted more like an agitator than a presidential candidate.

He ostentatiously rode through cities and towns with his Negro secretary in the seat beside him. He chose the homes of Negro supporters for meals and overnight stops. In Little Rock, his supporters picked four places for him to speak, knowing that he might be refused permission at all four (he was), knowing also that there were at least a dozen places where he could have spoken without raising any objection.

Jeering Crowds. Wallace was sincerely and visibly shaken by his hostile reception. Said Wallace: "There is something so unlovely about hate when you see it distorting the human face." In three days in North Carolina, booing, jeering crowds drowned out his attempts to speak. He and his party were pelted with dozens of eggs and tomatoes. He was hit at least nine times, splattered by near misses five times. In Hickory, N.C., two rotten eggs plopped near him. Cried Wallace bitterly: "As Jesus Christ told his disciples, if at any town they will not listen to you will ingly, then shake the dust from your feet and go elsewhere."* He shook off the dust of Hickory.

After that, Henry was not without sympathizers. North Carolina's Governor Gregg Cherry condemned the mob's conduct. President Truman denounced it as "highly un-American." Mississippi's Governor Fielding Wright, the Dixiecrats' vice presidential candidate, urged all Mississippians to behave. In Greensboro, N.C., Judge E. Earle Rives sentenced two teenage egg-throwers to write over & over: "I disapprove of what you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it." The nation's press, including the South's, lectured on the right of free speech.

In Birmingham, Ala., Public Safety Commissioner Eugene ("Bull") Connor was on record: "I ain't gonna let no darkies and white folk segregate together in this town." While Wallace waited in his car near by, a representative announced that he would not speak to any meeting that "violates the right of free assembly"—meaning a segregated meeting. A volley of eggs sailed over his head. A small, angry group found Wallace's car, thumped fists on its fenders, took turns glaring through the windows. "Look at that guy," said one. "He can't even afford to get a haircut."

Cried Wallace: "There is a long chain that links unknown young hoodlums in North Carolina or Alabama with men in finely tailored business suits in the great financial centers of New York or Boston, men who make a dollars-&-cents profit by setting race against race in the far away South." Wallace added: "If the U.S. does not get right on the segregation problem, she will lose her position of leadership in world affairs."

Ventured Witticism. The rest of the Wallace tour continued through an atmosphere of smoldering but restrained hostility. There were lapses. In Monroe, La., a tomato splashed on his car. In Shreveport, he ran into a barrage of eggs and tomatoes. One egg struck his car in Memphis. But at his last speeches in Tennessee, in the heart of TVA territory, he was cheered. Wallace plucked up his spirits, ventured a witticism. He declared that he was trying to develop an egg of higher viscosity. "It won't scatter so far when it breaks—a sort of non-spattering egg."

What had he achieved? He had thrown a harsh light on the problem of racial segregation—a problem which the U.S. as a whole cannot continue to shrug off. He had shown that there are a few hooligans in the South and also responsible statesmen who deplore hooliganism. He had found material for future demagogic campaign speeches, although it was unlikely that he had changed many votes.

Wrote the Charlotte, N.C. News: ". . . he mortifies us. There are men in the world who are bothered with neither Henry Wallace's confusion nor his extensive good will. They are trading on him, and he, the poor sap, is peddling his wares of doubt, uncertainty, and confusion, scourging himself and singing psalms."

In Rexburg, Idaho, two ex-G.I.s tossed peaches and eggs at Senator Glen Taylor, Henry Wallace's running mate. In West Frankfort, a southern Illinois mining town, a gang of young toughs broke up a meeting and stoned Curtis MacDougall, Progressive candidate for U.S. Senator. MacDougall was hit by ten stones as he retreated to his trailer with his wife and children. At week's end, Tass's New York Bureau gleefully cabled Moscow that an organized reign of terror conducted by "fascist hooligans" was under way against Wallace and his Progressives.

* St. Matthew 10:14

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