CHAPTER 11

GEORGE WALLACE FOR PRESIDENT

By the spring of 1964, Governor George Wallace of Alabama had become the leading national spokesperson for continuing racial segregation in the southern United States. He also was the leading critic of the civil rights bill then undergoing a southern Democratic filibuster in the U.S. Senate. Upon the occasion of his inauguration as governor of Alabama, Wallace had defiantly challenged those who would end racial discrimination in the United States. He said words similar to these:

"I stand here in the very Cradle of the Confederacy. I speak from the very heart of the great Anglo-Saxon Southland. I draw the line in the Dixie dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of northern tyranny. And I say: Segregation now! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation forever!"

Early in 1964, George Wallace announced his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for president of the United States. Wallace said he would run against President Johnson and campaign on the issue of all-out opposition to racial integration. He took special aim at the civil rights bill under consideration in the U.S. Senate. He clearly hoped that, by running well against President Johnson in some Democratic presidential primaries, he could defeat the bipartisan effort in the Senate to cloture the southern filibuster of the civil rights bill.

George Wallace had made a famous attempt in the spring of 1963 to "bar the school house door" and prevent desegregation of the University of Alabama. Wallace had been forced to stand aside, and the university

had been integrated by a U.S. court order. Wallace emerged from the confrontation, however, as the hero of southern segregationists. He had successfully turned himself into a national symbol of opposition to black civil rights.

Wallace's strategy was to try to win presidential primary elections outside the old South. He therefore filed in the Democratic presidential primaries in Wisconsin, Indiana, and Maryland. What would happen if Wallace won one of those three primaries? Civil rights leaders feared that their plans for beating the filibuster would be seriously damaged. Word leaked out of the White House that President Johnson himself told close associates that a Wallace victory would "stiffen the southerners and their will to keep on fighting the civil rights bill." Lyndon Johnson thought that, after a Wallace primary victory or two, the pro-civil rights forces in the Senate might begin to fall apart.

President Johnson refused to permit direct criticism of his presidential administration by campaigning against George Wallace himself. Johnson quickly recruited "favorite son" candidates to run in his place in each of the three states. In Wisconsin, the Johnson stand-in was Democratic Governor John W. Reynolds. In Indiana, Johnson was replaced on the ballot by Democratic Governor Matthew Welsh. In Maryland, the man chosen to run in President Johnson's stead was Democratic U.S. Senator Daniel Brewster.

Things had gone well enough for the Johnson forces in Wisconsin. Governor Reynolds won the primary and guaranteed all of Wisconsin's delegate votes at the Democratic National Convention for President Johnson. George Wallace polled more than 264,000 votes in Wisconsin, however. That was many more than the news media predicted he would get in a northern state. All of a sudden, George Wallace was winning the "expectations game." Wallace lost the primary, but he did better than expected. In the eyes of the press, that made him a "winner." A report in *Time* magazine was typical:

"The real issue in the primary was civil rights. Wallace had entered the Wisconsin primary to demonstrate that many northern, as well as southern, whites are unhappy about current civil rights trends. And he demonstrated just that - dramatically."

The results were much the same in Indiana. Governor Welsh defeated

George Wallace by a margin of more than two-to-one, but the newspaper and television commentators focused all their attention on the 170,146 votes that George Wallace polled. Skillfully exploiting this advantage created by the news media's expectations game, Wallace claimed his second place finish in Indiana was a victory.

"Our campaign for states' rights won," Wallace told the press on primary election night. "We began by shaking the eyeteeth of all those northern liberals in Wisconsin. The noises you hear tonight are the eyeteeth falling out of all the northern liberals in Indiana."

National press attention quickly shifted to Maryland's Democratic presidential primary scheduled for May 19, 1964. It would be George Wallace's last chance to try to win a presidential primary held in the North or a Border State.

The civil rights forces were genuinely frightened that Wallace just might win Maryland. It was a state that had not seceded from the Union during the Civil War, but it was a former slave state and located south of the Mason-Dixon line, the traditional boundary between northern freedom and southern slavery. George Wallace had polled 30 percent or more of the vote in Wisconsin and Indiana, both of them northern states that were steadfastly loyal to the Union during the Civil War. It was not inconceivable that Wallace could poll 50 percent or more in a former slave state such as Maryland.

WJZ-TV

Because I had written my doctoral dissertation on voting behavior in the Baltimore metropolitan area, I had become widely quoted in Maryland newspapers on the twin subjects of Baltimore and Maryland politics. As George Wallace's campaign to win Maryland in the 1964 presidential primaries began to heat up, I received a telephone call from the news director at *WJZ-TV*, the *ABC* (American Broadcasting Company) television outlet in Baltimore.

I had done previous work for *WJZ-TV* analyzing election campaigns. I was asked to do more of the same for the 1964 Maryland presidential

primary. I was to comment on TV on the election campaign as it went along. I also was scheduled to appear on *WJZ-TV* on primary election night to analyze the voting results.

As I began doing my television commentary on the 1964 Maryland presidential primary, I took the position that George Wallace would probably win the primary. My thinking started with the Eastern Shore of Maryland, on the east side of the Chesapeake Bay, and with southern Maryland, south of Baltimore City. Those were rural farming areas which, prior to the Civil War, had large numbers of plantations and large numbers of African-American slaves to work those plantations. That was going to be Wallace country for sure.

Some of those votes, I said "on the air," would be offset by western Maryland. That was Appalachian mountain country up there. Western Maryland never had any plantations or very many slaves. Senator Daniel Brewster, President Johnson's stand-in for the Maryland presidential primary, should win up there. A big Brewster vote in western Maryland, I argued on the evening news shows, would partially off-set the Wallace vote on the Eastern Shore and in southern Maryland.

The real problem for Senator Brewster, I said repeatedly on TV, was going to be white voters in Baltimore City. Democratic elected officials and political leaders in Baltimore City who were white were all officially supporting Senator Brewster. In private, however, those same people were telling everyone that the white working-class voters of Baltimore City were going to vote for Wallace. There was a real possibility that, this time around, the white Democratic faithful in Baltimore City were not going to follow the instructions of their white Democratic leaders.

This phenomenon was called "white backlash." I used the term frequently on *WJZ-TV* and whenever being interviewed by the newspapers in Baltimore. In a populous city such as Baltimore, it was the white working-class that lived and worked close to the black population. These lower middle-class white voters believed black gains from civil rights were going to cost them personally. Above all, these center-city white voters were frightened that Equal Employment Opportunity would take away their jobs and give them to black people. George Wallace had

proved particularly adept at winning white backlash votes in the 1964 Wisconsin and Indiana presidential primaries.

The big question mark in Maryland was the Baltimore and Washington, D.C., suburbs. Many people assumed the suburbs were filled with white people and therefore Wallace would do reasonably well in them. The word was that Wallace was going to win the primary. Everywhere you went in Baltimore City, everyone was saying that Wallace had Maryland won.

By the time there was a month to go before election day, I thought the situation was looking dire for Senator Brewster. I said so on television. That meant the situation was looking dire for President Lyndon Johnson. The situation also was looking dire for the civil rights bill.

THE BREWSTER CAMPAIGN

Some years later, in 1982, I interviewed Daniel Brewster about why he had taken on the unpleasant and challenging task of stepping in for Lyndon Johnson and running against George Wallace for the 1964 Democratic nomination for president.

"Let's be honest about it," Brewster told me. "I was not Lyndon Johnson's first choice to be his stand-in candidate to run against George Wallace here in Maryland. President Johnson's first choice was my good friend, J. Millard Tawes, the Democratic governor of Maryland at the time."

"Tawes was a popular and successful Democrat in Maryland politics," Brewster told me, "but Tawes turned the president down. He turned him down flat. Then Tawes let it be known that he didn't think maybe Wallace could be beaten in Maryland. 'Beating Wallace is not a cinch,' Tawes said. 'And it's not our fight,' Tawes said. Tawes thought Lyndon Johnson should run against Wallace himself and not make some poor Maryland politician, such as me, take the heat in Johnson's behalf."

"But I saw that the eyes of the nation were on Maryland," Brewster said to me, his voice rising with commitment and enthusiasm. "I saw there had to be a political leader who would step forward to save Mary-

land from the disgrace of being the only state outside the secessionist South to give its convention delegate votes to George Wallace. I knew that there had to be a man from Maryland who would have the courage to stand up and turn back Wallace in his final drive for votes in the North and the Border States."

"When no one else would do it," Brewster said, "I decided to do it. Because the job of beating George Wallace in Maryland had to be done."

I had watched, with a political scientist's trained eye, the swift development of Daniel Brewster's political career in Maryland in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Danny, as his close friends called him, grew up in Baltimore County. That was the populous county to the north of Baltimore City that contained Baltimore's most upwardly-mobile suburbs.

Danny Brewster was a member of the so-called "horsey set," a group of people with large homes with a stable for the family horses on the property. For amusement, these people often ran steeplechase races, galloping over the countryside on horseback and jumping wooden fences and low stone walls. Because of the resemblance of these horse races to English fox hunting, Danny Brewster's part of Baltimore County was often referred to as "Hunt Country."

In the manner of English nobility, Danny Brewster was "born" to a career as a Maryland politician. Due to his family's prominence in Baltimore County affairs, Brewster was elected to the Maryland state legislature in his late twenties. It was my opinion that Danny Brewster had been sent to the state legislature the way other people's children were sent to summer camp.

Before anyone knew it, Danny Brewster had been elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and, shortly thereafter, to the United States Senate. To most observers, Danny Brewster was the "Golden Boy" of Democratic politics in Maryland in the early 1960s.

THE ROAR OF THE CROWD

The Brewster for President campaign in Maryland did not get off to

an awe-inspiring start. At campaign rallies held in downtown Baltimore, supporters of George Wallace packed the audience and waved signs and yelled slogans supporting racial segregation. Voters, most of them from urban, white, working-class neighborhoods, yelled insults and epithets at Senator Brewster. One of them stood up on his chair and yelled "Cadillac pink!" That particular slur implied that Senator Brewster was a wealthy Communist sympathizer. Opponents of racial integration often accused strong supporters of civil rights of being Communist revolutionaries in disguise.

The boos and catcalls from the audience at Brewster for President rallies became so loud that the rallies could hardly proceed. Senator Brewster was labeled a "race-mixing socialist!" People in the crowd waved "Wallace for President" signs. Others waved banners with the famous racist slogan: "Two-Four-Six-Eight; We Ain't Going To Integrate!" The large groups of people that went to Brewster rallies and tried to disrupt them were known as George Wallace's "jeering squads."

Senator Brewster later said to me: "What happened to my popularity? I was elected to the Senate in 1962, just two years earlier, by one of the largest vote margins in Maryland political history. Where had all that support gone? I had never been booed or razzed in my entire political career. Until I ran up against George Wallace and his racist supporters, people had always treated me with respect."

BOTH ENDS AGAINST THE MIDDLE

By two weeks before primary election day, the civil rights forces on Capitol Hill and the national news media were in something of a quandary, not knowing what to do to stop Governor Wallace's growing momentum in the Maryland presidential primary. The one person who did have some advice was me, and I started giving out with it on *WJZ-TV* and in commentary reported in the Baltimore and Washington newspapers. The thrust of my thinking, presented as objective fact, went like this:

"The Brewster for President forces have to forget the traditional

Democratic technique in Maryland of lining up political support among white voters in Baltimore City. The white working class is going to ignore Democratic Party political leaders, including President Johnson, and vote for George Wallace. That vote is gone. The sooner the Brewster for President forces forget about it the better."

"Stop having Senator Brewster give speeches in Baltimore City. They will all end with the crowd cheering for Wallace and jeering Senator Brewster."

"The way to win this election is to unite the black vote in Baltimore City with the upper middle-class white suburban vote in the Baltimore suburbs and the Washington, D.C., suburbs. The best source of Brewster votes will be in Montgomery County, Maryland, the most affluent part of the Washington, D.C., suburbs."

That was my analysis of the situation, and I pushed it as relentlessly on Capitol Hill as I did on trips to Baltimore to appear on *WJZ-TV*. "Join the black voters with well-to-do white voters in the Baltimore and Washington suburbs," I repeatedly said, "and that will defeat the lower middle-class voters who support Wallace. The proper technique is to play *both ends against the middle*."

My gratuitous advice to the Brewster forces was presented through the unlikely means of the evening television news and interviews in the newspaper. One critic of my advice, a longtime Democratic Party member of the Maryland legislature, pointed out that black voters in Baltimore city are famous for not bothering to vote. "It is political legend," he noted, "that blacks are apathetic voters, particularly in presidential primaries. There are no African-American political organizations to deliver African-American voters to the polls."

I gave a ready response: "Senator Brewster should campaign in the black churches in Baltimore. Many of them are the same churches where they have been holding civil rights meetings and organizing sit-in demonstrations. Put the black ministers of Baltimore to work on the problem. They can turnout a record black vote for Daniel Brewster."

The Lyndon Johnson White House had arranged for a top Washington, D.C., campaign consultant to come to Baltimore to write press

releases and advertising materials for the Brewster campaign. The consultant came up with what I thought was a pretty good advertising slogan: "Reject George Wallace's Invitation To Be Irresponsible." The slogan implied that anyone who voted for Wallace was not taking seriously the great civil rights crisis currently facing the United States.

Everywhere I went, I kept pushing the same old line: "The black vote plus the suburban white vote equals victory for Senator Brewster!" I pushed it with every newspaper reporter and television reporter that interviewed me. I pushed it extra hard on *WJZ-TV*, Channel 13, the *ABC* outlet in Baltimore, because I was the TV station's resident Maryland political analyst.

I will never know the extent to which my efforts affected either the Brewster for President campaign or the eventual outcome of the election.

SAFE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

Presidential primary election day in Maryland was May 19, 1964. When all the votes were counted, Maryland U.S. Senator Daniel Brewster defeated Alabama Governor George Wallace by 57 percent to 43 percent. Wallace did much better in Maryland, however, than he did in Indiana and Wisconsin, where he received 30 percent and 34 percent of the vote respectively.

George Wallace immediately claimed his 43 percent of the vote was a victory. Speaking to his supporters at an election night rally, Wallace looked at the crowd and the television cameras and said:

"Everyone knows we won tonight. We had against us the national Democratic Party. We had against us the Democratic organization here in Maryland. Yet, in spite of all that opposition, Maryland voters have given me a vote that represents the philosophy of state's rights, local government, and individual liberty."

Later, talking to individual reporters, Wallace gave a more frank analysis:

"Look here! If it hadn't been for the [African-American] bloc vote, I'd have won it all. I got a majority of the white vote."

Wallace was correct when he claimed he won the white vote in Maryland. As part of my election analysis for *WJZ-TV*, I had identified representative groups of black precincts in Baltimore City, white precincts in Baltimore City, and white precincts in the Maryland suburbs. All three groups voted as I predicted they would. Blacks voted for Brewster, whites in Baltimore City voted for Wallace, and whites in the Maryland suburbs voted for Brewster.

It was true that George Wallace won a narrow majority of the vote in all the white voting precincts, both city and suburban, but that narrow lead among white voters was easily overwhelmed by a heavy vote for Daniel Brewster in the black precincts in Baltimore City.

I was quick to go on the air on election night and point out that my prediction of how Senator Brewster could win the election had come true. I said: "A winning combination of African-American votes in Baltimore City, added to upper-income white votes in the Maryland suburbs, produced a clear majority for civil rights. This election proved that, in northern and Border States where large numbers of blacks have the right to vote, being against civil rights is a losing proposition."

Senator Brewster was jubilant. "There is no substitute for victory," he told the news media on primary election night. "We will go to the Democratic National Convention, and Maryland will stand up and cast its votes for President Johnson."

When all the vote counting and vote analysis were over in the 1964 Maryland presidential primary, I once again gave all my time to working for Senator Kuchel and the civil rights bill on Capitol Hill. I was exultant about the results in Maryland. Governor Wallace was defeated in my home state. That ended once-and-for-all the dream of the southern filibusterers in the Senate that Wallace would win Maryland and unleash a national groundswell of opposition to the civil rights bill.