

East Carolina Teachers College

October 30th, 1923.

Address by President R. H. Wright.

Scripture Lesson: 3rd Chapter of the Book of James.

In the discussion of those things that enter into the American life, that make the spirit of the American people, I want to talk to you about the political party, and I am not talking about any one political party, I am talking about all political parties. This government of ours has sometimes been called a government of the parties. In its early conception our people did not have in mind at all the organization of the American people. It is two or more great political organizations. If you will notice how the President of the United States is to be elected you will see that there is no party issue involved at all, but it was only a very short time before the people of America did organize themselves into two political parties. Some times we have several political parties. The leaders in a political party are selected in various ways. The different parties meet together and draw up what is known as the party platform, and get out what is known as the party hand book in which they state the platform of the political party, and then explain what the platform means, and give reasons why, or arguments, sometimes they are hardly reasons, why the people should support this particular political party. Then they have a candidate whom they select to run for the given office, whatever it may be, from President of the United States on down, and he runs for that office on that political party platform.

Now those party platforms and those political discussions that follow are certainly one of the great means of shaping public opinion and forming the spirit of the American people. The candidates for office go from place to place, if it is national, throughout the nation, and if it is only a state wide campaign from place to place throughout the state, or if it is only for congress, throughout that congressional district, and there they discuss the political questions that are before the people; the principles of government that the different parties stand for. Now in those discussions the people of this country get an idea of what the party stands for, and it enters into the make up of the spirit of our people. Should those political discussions be joint discussions, or should they be separate in time and in place, theretically speaking they should be joint, in other words, to-day the democratic candidate and the republican candidate, and I take those two simply because they are the large parties in America, should meet, say, in Greenville for discussion of the party platform, and the principles that each party stands for. Theoretically speaking it would be better for them to meet jointly for this reason. If the representative of one party makes a mis-statement of fact the representative of the other party has a chance to answer it before the same audience, and to give the people the other version immediately. Furthermore if it is a joint campaign

you will have a better representation of the people present, both democrats and republicans will be present at a joint meeting in large numbers, and both will see both sides. It is not good for a state to be what is known as a one party state. Where all the people belong to one political party there isn't much chance for discussion; there isn't much chance for bringing out the finer points of government, and the officers when they have been selected do not feel that they are under any obligations, or practically due any obligations, except to the people who belong to that party.

I have lived in a one party state, and I have lived in a two party state, and I know that the officers are much more particular in a two party state than they are in a one party state. I am sure you know what I know about a one party state. Every North Carolinian ought to know what that means because you are living practically in a one party state, Of course it is all right if you vote the democratic ticket, and in Pennsylvania it is just as bad on the other side, and of course it is all right if you vote the Republican ticket, and the strong partisan in North Carolina pities the terrible conditions that are in Pennsylvania, and the strong partisan in Pennsylvania pities conditions that are in North Carolina. It is tit for tat. It is not good for a state to be that way. I am saying that to you, and I belong to the majority party in North Carolina, but the truth is that thing that makes people \_\_\_\_\_ and the truth is brought before the people, and when a people are divided in their thinking, and when the people are wide awake to the issues of government that are before them, and the people are more thoughtful about the government, and are much more wide awake in a two party state than they are in a one party state so far as the political questions are concerned. Now one of the great means of creating sentiment, and forming the spirit of the American people is through these political campaigns. The best speakers that the state has are sent out to discuss the issue before the people, and in the discussion we find the truth in political campaigns based on prejudice instead of principle it is bad. It makes no difference to me what party does that. If they go before the people of America to appeal to prejudice instead of principle they give to the people a false conception. Our nation should be founded politically on great principles of government and not on hatred, and hatred is at the bottom of prejudice. We have had too much of that all over this nation. We have had entirely too much of it in this good south-land of ours, and the nation has had too much of it during the last four years. Unfortunately for the American people the last Presidential campaign was founded on prejudice instead of principle, and as a result, we as a nation have not risen to our opportunity. I am not blaming the leaders, I am blaming the folks. We have not risen to our opportunity; we have not gone forward as a nation. We have been halting and hesitating and waiting, time serving instead of standing clean and clear for the great principles of government, and letting the American people be the leaders of the world. Because our last presidential campaign was founded on prejudice instead of principle, the American people have lost their leadership among the nations of the world. We are now in the midst of a demonstration of that truth. Whenever a party platform is founded on prejudice instead of principle it is bad for the people. I am not blaming the republican party; don't get that into your head, I don't mean that at all. I am blaming the American

people. I am not knocking the republican party because they are in power, I don't mean that at all. Didn't either one of the political parties put up the best leader.

I was talking to a man during the campaign about the political leaders in America, when America needed her greatest leader. There were several of us talking and one of them said, "well, it is almost a comedy on our country that the candidates for President of the United States, one of them is in the Federal prison, and still a candidate for President of the United States, and one of the by standers says, "yes, but I don't belong to his party, I have absolutely no faith in his party but he is the strongest candidate who is before the American people to-day. Now think what it means when a nation will found its campaign on prejudice instead of great principles of government. It gives to the people a false concept of what the American government is. It gives us a false spirit. That's the thing I want to get before you. I don't care so much about the political conditions as they now exist- not in this talk this morning- but I do care something about the principle involved in it. You, when you become voters, and I believe, according to the last census there is not any woman over 18, so it may be about three years before you can vote, but when you become voters you want to avoid casting your vote for any party or any candidate founded on prejudice. There are great principles of government, and you want to ring true to those principles because it is the principle that is involved, and it is the principle of the government that must come out of the spirit of the American people. We paid pretty dearly for it, and some day we are going to wake both political parties, so don't get it in to your heads that I am knocking the republican party. The American people see it, and we want to demand that the political parties put up a platform founded on fundamental principles of government. We want to create that spirit in the American people. There is good in political parties, because it is one of the great instruments in shaping the spirit of the American people.

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