

“Negroes At The Crossroads”
W.P. Hayes

Read the following newspaper article that pertains to the 1936 presidential election and list the reasons provided for African Americans to vote for the Democrats or for the Republicans. Record your answers in section two of Resource Sheet 2.

“Now, what has been the effect of the continued governmental largess on the morale of those receiving it? One of the certain effects has been to destroy self-respect. And another effect has been the destruction of initiative, the complete paralysis of the will to work. Relief clients have been encouraged to accept in preference to work because idleness paid them better than work.

“Don’t bite the hand that feeds you, exclaimed the leader.” Now we will not deny that Negroes, along with other racial groups have been cared for by the use of relief funds, but we insist that it is the duty of intelligent voters to look at the other side of the relief picture.

For instance, it has cost the government an annual outlay of 300 to 400 millions of dollars in overhead to administer relief, and bureaucracy, politics, and favoritism have been rampant all along the line. It is a known fact that even now practically all the relief agencies in this country are being mobilized for the express purpose of re-electing the present administration.

Does not this slogan imply a continuation of the dole as a settled and permanent policy of the New Dealers...are the American people prepared to accept the permanent dole as the remedy for the depression?”

We cannot bring ourselves to believe that any considerable number of Negroes will be hoodwinked into voting the Democratic ticket merely because the government has used the money of taxpayers to give them bread to eat and a place to sleep. Decent and self-respecting Negroes want something better than a government dole. They want jobs that will raise them above the low subsistence level to which they have been reduced through no fault of their own.

The Democratic Party, after more than 3 years of experimentation, trial, and error, has failed utterly in providing such jobs.

...Negroes today are saying:

We want work, not the dole. We want an opportunity to make a livelihood for ourselves and families, not a handout from the Federal government.

...I could not support Franklin D. Roosevelt without giving by tacit approval to all that the Democratic South stands for...say what you will or may, the base of the Democratic Party is in the south where discrimination, Jim-Crowism, peonage, lynch-law, and other un-American practices are rampant. Can we shut our eyes and swallow this?”