

# New party aims to make South rise again

About 100 gather to begin launching reborn Confederacy

By Sean Scully  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — The notion that the South will rise again doesn't seem so strange to John Wiseman Simmons.

"This is part of who I am. It's part of my heritage," Mr. Simmons, a computer analyst from Memphis, said at yesterday's convention announcing the second attempt to forge an independent Southern nation. "My ancestors lived under one more flag than everybody else — there's something special about it."

Mr. Simmons and about 100 other Southern patriots turned out on a balmy North Carolina afternoon to witness the signing of the Asheville Declaration — billed by the authors at the South's declaration of independence — and to get in on the ground floor of the new "Southern Party," a regional nationalist party explicitly committed to the founding of a new Confederacy.

"This is most important event in Dixie since Lee's surrender at Appomattox," said Jerry Baxley, first vice chairman of the new party.

"One-hundred and thirty-four years after the shotgun wedding at Appomattox, the Southern nation is rising again," said George Kalas, chairman of the party.

But the founder of this new party are not simply dreamers, they insist, besotted by the romanticized images of "Gone With the Wind" and endlessly dreaming of the glory of "The Lost Cause."

Instead, they say, the Southern Party represents a genuine attempt to give the distinctive flavor of the South a political face and restore the idea that the states are more than mere postal codes.

"All we have to do is dust off the Confederate constitution, redact out all the anachronistic references to involuntary servitude ... and we would already have a government that is more free than the one we are already living under," Mr. Kalas said, drawing rousing applause from the convention delegates.

And they have some modern precedents. The independence movement in Quebec began as a pipe dream in the mid-1960s — polling about 8 percent support in 1962 — yet it has become a serious political force.

Likewise, nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales have managed to force the British government to grant them considerable home rule and have, for the first time in almost three centuries, called into question the future of the United Kingdom.



Civil War re-enactors are busy at yesterday's inaugural rally for the Southern Party, which seeks to resurrect the Confederacy.

Southern independence "won't be in my lifetime," said Dana Gibbs, 25, of Stockbridge, Ga., a mother of two young children. "Hopefully, it will be in the lifetime of my son and daughter."

The specific program of the party will be worked out at a convention next year, but there are a few key elements — limited government, low taxation, international neutrality, state's rights and private education. Above all is adherence to the literal words of the U.S. Constitution, in or out of the current federal union.

"The last best hope for constitutional liberty lies with the people of the South," the Asheville Declaration says, "predominantly Celtic and British in culture, true to their Christian faith, inspired by the memories and sacrifices of their Colonial and Confederate forefathers, and jealous of their ancient liberties."

The point of the party — which will start by fielding candidates for the various state legislatures — "in one word is liberty. ... The federal government had totally stepped beyond the contract it made with the states" when the Constitution was first ratified, said Dennis



Party Chairman George Kalas (left) and Vice Chairman Jerry Baxley display copies of the Asheville Declaration adopted by delegates.

Raiff, a dentist from Tallahassee, Fla.

The organizers of the Southern Party are quick to say they are not interested in the most emotionally sensitive question of the last Confederacy — slavery. Although the crowd in Asheville yesterday was entirely white and predominantly male, organizers insist they are

open to all residents of the South of whatever race or ethnicity.

"Southerners are not a race, they are a people," Mr. Kalas said in his lengthy and forceful speech to the convention.

As their banner, organizers chose the final official flag of the Confederate states, adopted in March 1865 as the war effort col-

lapsed — a white flag with a wide red stripe up the right side and the famous Confederate battle flag in the upper left corner.

The symbolism is important, organizers say. The flag was approved by the Confederate Congress a month after legislators agreed to enlist black soldiers in the Southern army, a move widely seen as the end of slavery in the South. That means the final banner was clearly a symbol for all Southerners, Mr. Kalas said.

"The South is a multiethnic and multicultural area; it always has been," Mr. Simmons said.

Although yesterday's event was suffused with the symbols and language of the Old South — including armed re-enactors in the uniforms of the Confederate armies — Mr. Kalas decreed an absolute ban on any party member advocating violence to overthrow the current government.

In talking with friends about the party's dream of independence, Mr. Simmons said, "I had one or two who said 'isn't that subversive?'"

"I said no," he said with a grin and a shrug. "It's all perfectly legal."

# Secession may not have been ruled out

## Texas vs. White leaves door open

By Sean Scully  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

It may be a surprise to most Americans, but the Civil War did not settle the question of secession in the United States.

The Supreme Court ratified the result of the war in 1868, ruling that the unilateral secession of 1861 was unconstitutional.

But that famous case, known as Texas vs. White, left one tantalizing possibility that could open the door for the South to rise again.

The justices ruled that, at the moment Texas ratified the Constitution and became a U.S. state in 1845, "the union between Texas and the other states was as complete, as perpetual, and as indissoluble as the union between the original states."

That seems to rule out any future secession, except for the next sentence.

"There was no place for reconsideration, or revocation, except through revolution or through consent of the States," they added.

The "revolution" part didn't work out so well the first time, from a Southern perspective, meaning a second attempt is not very likely.

So what about the "consent of the states" part?

Constitutional scholar A.E. Dick Howard, a law professor at the University of Virginia, says the court, with that phrase, left the door open, if only a crack, to secession.

It's not, however, exactly clear what the justices had in mind — Texas vs. White does not elaborate on that hint and the court has not addressed secession again.

Most likely, he said, a legal secession would take the form of an "interstate compact" drafted and approved by Congress. It is possible, however unlikely, for a state or group of states to negotiate successfully for secession.

Just how that could be achieved is not clear. Secession minded states could, as they did in 1861, call a convention or hold a referendum on independence. Since the Supreme Court outlawed unilateral secession, separatists would still need the permission of Congress and the other states or they could once more face armed intervention to restore the Union.

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