

Holmes Alexander *S-1* 4-12-67

Showmen Garrison and Wallace Provide Entertainment for Those Who Like It

NEW ORLEANS—Food and money are the staples of conversation in this fun-city, but they're being left on the sideboard while people nibble on the hors d'oeuvres called Jim Garrison and George Wallace.

Everybody seems to know the tall, dramatic district attorney and seldom refer to him other than as Jim.

His political ambitions are well known. His abilities are well recognized. His admirers are torn between two sets of beliefs about his razzle-dazzle bid to prove that a conspiracy brought about the assassination of President Kennedy.

On the one hand, his series of arrests have flushed a covey of shiftless and other bizarre characters, but haven't produced fact one to show them implicated in the crime of the century.

On the other hand, I'm told that Mr. Garrison is likely to conjure up the credibility of a conspiracy whether the reality exists or not. His career is on the line, and the Warren Commission with its big name membership and its convenient theory of a lone, crazed assassin has taken on the undeserved role of a dude whose humiliation would stop the show and bring down the house with applause.

If Mr. Garrison can show the killers in the pay of Castro or the Chinese, he will be able to discard the threadbare garments of a cleaner-upper of sin in New Orleans and put on the raiment of a crimebuster beyond compare. The rest of the country may be seriously concerned about the discovery of a final solution to the Cuban tragedy or be getting fed up on authors and publicists who commercialize on President Kennedy's foul murder, but Mr. Garrison's following in and around the Crescent City are in the grip of the grisly spook hunt which promises, if nothing else, plenty of hot copy.

George Wallace, prince consort of Alabama, isn't quite as spicy a topic as Jim Garrison, but conversation about his political plans for 1968 are habit forming and seem not to cloy the appetite. The governor's husband says he's running for the presidency against both the



HOLMES ALEXANDER

major parties, and people in the Deep South have long ago stopped laughing at the presumptuousness of the former governor's intentions, if they ever did.

Republican leaders are of one mind about the George Wallace candidacy — it could render the GOP presidential

nomination worthless and clinch the reelection of Lyndon Johnson. This is not because the businessmen, lawyers and professors who form the conservative core of Southern Republicanism have the slightest use for Mr. Wallace. They look upon him as a charming mountebank but distrust his flimflam ways. Mr. Wallace could canvass for Republican leadership backing from Montgomery to Mobile by way of Baltimore and not collect a beggar's tin cup of encouragement from the ladies and gentlemen who sponsor the Grand Old Party in what was once Democratic country.

And yet he is going to run big among the masses of white folks in the Southland and borderland whose understanding of conservatism is part visual, part visceral. The race issue is black-and-white to the farmers, villagers and laborers who thrill to the Wallace call of the wild. The perennial issues of high federal taxation, irksome federal regulations and the alleged federal bungling of the war are all emotionalized by Mr. Wallace, the great simplifier.

Where conservative intellectuals could not lead a stampede out of the Democratic ranks into the Republican camps, Mr. Wallace can lead one of considerable size into the lost legion of a third party. By denying troops to the improving GOP, Wallace will neutralize that party's southern gains and do LBJ a signal, if unintended, service.

Two showmen: Garrison and Wallace. People who would always rather be entertained than instructed are held spellbound.

(Dist. by McNaught Syndicate, Inc.)