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Sen. Goldwater on Mr. Rehnquist and Arizona Voting

The time is long past due that the lie be put to the repeated observations of people who should know better relative to the supposed action of Mr. Rehnquist in preventing a person from voting.

Contrary to what Mr. Mitchell, Senator Bayh, Mr. Rauh and others might contend, this supposed event did not take place as they describe. Mr. Rehnquist has so stated many times and furthermore, Mr. Editor, I was there so I can speak with considerably more authority than any of the supposed experts can. Let's develop the history of this whole situation.

Under Arizona's Constitution prior to the Civil Rights Voting Act, a man had to be literate to vote and the test generally was to read the first line of the Constitution and write one's name. Although this was a part of the Constitution, I cannot recall more than a few instances of it ever being brought into play at the polling place. The matter that both parties in Arizona became concerned with this grew from our antiquated registration laws which have long since been changed.

Under these laws a person would not have his voting precinct automatically changed when he moved from one place to another. Because of this it was possible to find some voters registered in as many as six different precincts. It was the practice in some isolated instances for these people to be looked up and taken to the places where they could vote and if they were not challenged, they could have their vote recorded as many

times as long as they were not challenged.

Before going into the watcher setup, let me tell of another practice that prevailed in Arizona in some precincts before we changed our paper ballot. The ballot used to be printed with the names appearing in the same order throughout, so it was a simple task for someone to take a string and tie knots in it so that when placed beside the names to be voted it would show who to vote for, and this string would be given to the illiterate voter who merely went into the voting poll, placed the string beside the ballot and marked his X where each knot appeared. This was subsequently corrected by alternating the names on about every two hundred ballots as they came off the press, so the string trick didn't work after that.

Now to prevent unqualified voters from casting a ballot, each party, the Democrats and Republicans, set up what we call poll watchers. At each polling place, even today with voting machines we have them and they are applied to every polling place in the state regardless of whether they may be in a predominantly Mexican-American neighborhood, Negro neighborhood or white neighborhood. We are interested in honest voting regardless of race, creed, color or location and that is the whole purpose of watching teams in each party, and they are approved by the County Board of Supervisors in Arizona.

Now to correct the allegations being brought out by his detractors concerning the specific operation in which Mr. Rehnquist

was involved, he was appointed along with several other attorneys from both parties by the county chairmen of both parties to give advice and guidance to assure that voting was done only by properly registered voters. The statutes of Arizona recognized the need for polling challengers to assure that only properly registered voters cast a ballot so Mr. Rehnquist and others were seated at a central location. When a challenge was called in from a poll watcher, legal advice was given, not only by him, but by other lawyers gathered for this specific purpose.

I don't believe that Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Rauh or Senator Bayh stretching their liberal thoughts as far as they can can find anything wrong with this as illegal voting, whether it touched upon a man's right to vote because of literacy or illiteracy or his right to vote in more than one precinct or his right to use a string with knots in it. I don't believe these three gentlemen would condone dishonest voting in their precincts any more than the Republicans and Democrats in Arizona would condone it in their precincts.

I offer this letter, and I hope you will publish it, because if I ever heard a repetition of an outright lie day after day by the newspapers and in Senate speeches, it is this, and if it is raised on the Senate Floor it will be charged precisely as that, a lie.

BARRY GOLDWATER,
United States Senator, Arizona.

Washington.