



Associated Press

George Wallace of Alabama stresses point to Edwin Edwards of Louisiana at governors' meeting in Austin.

Wallace Hints at Another Try in '76

By David S. Broder
Washington Post Staff Writer

AUSTIN, Tex., Sept. 10—A combative George Wallace today challenged any "New South" Democratic governors to meet him in the 1976 presidential primary, saying "I'd win even bigger than I did in 1972."

In an interview at the Southern Governors' Conference here, the Alabama governor heaped scorn on the region's other presidential prospects and strongly implied he is ready to seek the Democratic nomination again.

Wallace said he would make only a few appearances this fall outside Alabama, where he faces nominal Republican opposition for his third term as governor.

Asked why he was not testing the political waters for 1976, as others are doing with their travels this fall, Wallace said, "I don't have to warm up. You're looking at one politician who's hot."

The Alabamian, looking extremely fit and a bit heavier in his wheelchair, dismissed the significance of the 1974 Southern gubernatorial primaries, which have seen an emergence of moderate and progressive Democrats in the several states and the defeat of such oldtime segregationists and Wallace supporters as Orval Faubus in Arkansas and Lester Maddox in Georgia.

"Some people who've been in are being voted out," said Wallace. "I don't see anything more to it than that."

Then, warming to his sub-

ject, the feisty governor said, "You fellows keep writing about the 'New South'—and you mention four or five governors—but never me."

"But I carried all the counties in Florida in 1972, and that's a New South state, if there ever was one. I went to North Carolina and beat Terry Sanford, the symbol of the New South. I beat him bad."

Wallace was referring to his victories in the Democratic primaries in those states, part of a winning streak that also included Tennessee, Michigan and Maryland, before his shooting in Maryland brought his 1972 campaign to a close.

"Let me tell you," Wallace said, "the New South is just as tired of this central government flim-flam — of giveaways and bureaucracy — as the Old South was. Naturally, people change, but the people in the South are less tolerant of big government interfering in their lives now than they were four years ago. They're tired of it."

Asked if he was concerned that he appears to have few political allies among the Democratic governors and gubernatorial candidates in his own region, Wallace said, "I never have political allies, except when they're running for office themselves. Then they like to name me as their friend."

"But I didn't have any allies among the Florida politicians when I carried every county in that state. I don't believe the people of Florida have

changed that much in two years. I believe I'd win even bigger than I did in 1972."

Wallace said that in 1972, few Southerners believed a man from their region could win the presidential nomination, "because it's been an unwritten rule that being a Southerner was a liability. You remember Lyndon Johnson, when he was running, said he was a Westerner, not a Southerner."

The Alabamian said the skepticism about a Southerner on the ticket had cost him votes in the 1972 primaries, "but that's no longer the case. It's an asset now."

Wallace said the emergence of a number of Southern prospects for the Democratic ticket—Florida Gov. Reubin Askew, Arkansas, Gov. Dale Bumpers, Georgia Gov. Jimmy

Carter, Sen. Lloyd Bentsen (D-Tex.), and perhaps others—was the direct result of his demonstrating "to both parties that there's no liability to being a Southerner. I'm glad I set the tone, so others won't automatically be excluded."

While Wallace's conversation appeared to indicate another bid for the Democratic nomination, he has not ruled out a third-party candidacy for President, similar to that he made in 1968.

"I'm not worried a bit about the Democratic Party," he said. "They received a pretty good message in 1972, and if they don't head that, then I just feel sorry for them."

"I've told them they better get back in touch with the average working American. But if they don't do that, I'm not going to worry about it."