

NARRATIVE REPORT
OF
NATIONAL POLITICAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

WESTWARD-HO HOTEL
PHOENIX, ARIZONA
SUNDAY, MARCH 26, 1961

In view of the successful activity on the part of the Spanish-speaking Americans during the 1960 National Democratic Convention in Los Angeles, and later during the very successful presidential campaign, on the part of the Viva Kennedy Clubs, J. Carlos McCormick of Washington, D.C., National Executive Director of the Viva Kennedy Clubs found it compelling to call a special conference of top leadership across the country in Phoenix, Arizona.

Those invited were persons who took an active part in the Kennedy campaign in addition to others who have displayed interest and who have contributed to the political development of the Spanish-speaking Americans.

No doubt, there were many who did not receive an invitation, however, this was due to the fact that the lists which were available to Mr. McCormick were not as complete as they should have been. It is fortunate that many persons interested in contributing to the historical political growth of our people made a sacrifice and attended the conference. Their contributions were as important and as well received as that of those who were fortunate to receive an invitation.

Saturday, March 25, representatives from the various states began to arrive. In the late evening an informal gathering took place in the cocktail lounge of the hotel. Groups from the various states began to caucus and speculate on the purpose of the meeting. Not much could be ascertained by the time we got through having our menudo.

Sunday, March 26, the day was opened with attendance at church service and breakfast. The number of people who arrived on Sunday morning was pleasantly surprising to a number of us. At 10:23 a.m., J. Carlos McCormick had opened the conference with a note of welcome. His introductory remarks were furthered by self-introduction of all the attendances.

Antonio Tinajero-G. was appointed secretary of the conference by the chairman pro-tem, J. Carlos McCormick.

Mr. McCormick read a very interesting report on the status of the Spanish-speaking American in the political field. He stated that four per cent of the national population of the United States is made up of Spanish-speaking Americans, and that of the total Spanish-speaking population, seven percent is represented by persons of Mexican lineage. Of the total population of the various states in the Southwest, the State of Arizona has approximately 12% Spanish-speaking Americans, California has some 10%, New Mexico, 35%, and Texas an estimated 21%.

Reports from the last presidential election indicate that there were many precincts in predominantly Spanish-speaking communities which produced returns such as the following: 369 for Kennedy, 5 for Nixon. There were many precincts in these same Spanish-speaking communities, especially in the Southwest, which produced one hundred percent returns for Kennedy and zero for Nixon, as in the cases of the Cities of El Paso and Los Angeles.

This leaves no doubt in the minds of the political machinery of both parties, as to the growing and dynamic potential of the Spanish-speaking voter throughout

the country. The great sacrifice, effort, planning, imagination, and co-ordination was affected by the American Spanish-speaking persons throughout the United States.

Such cities as Los Angeles, El Paso, and San Antonio were key areas within their respective states. Mr. McCormick stated that pressures and frustrations have motivated a determined desire to develop a national political structure through which we can all work towards a common end, that of political recognition, representation, and opportunity.

The principal idea for calling the meeting, as stated by Mr. McCormick, was the feasibility and value of remaining united in the respective states in order to preserve a more intimate means of communicating our thoughts and, therefore, produce concerted national political effort.

Mr. McCormick stated that we must formulate national goals if we are going to be effective in our effort to bring government and our people closer together.

The effectiveness of the Viva Kennedy operation is generally recognized. Awareness on the part of major politicians was stimulated by the last presidential election. As a result a lot of people do not want to see us united - including people in the Democratic party.

President Kennedy has expressed personally his profound gratitude to the Spanish-speaking Americans for this overwhelming support.

His channels of recognition are now necessarily what we would like them to be, but we must remember that the Congressional Delegations from the various states are the power with which we have to contend. He does not feel that we hold a club over his head and for this reason our rapport with him is far more cordial than that which exists with other more articulate and vocal groups.

Politically we may not yet be as sophisticated, but we are as tough, as imaginative, and as intelligent, as any other group.

Mr. McCormick read the reply to a Memorandum directed by him to the Attorney General Robert Kennedy regarding our status and in addition added some commentary on his personal conference with Mr. Robert Kennedy.

Mr. McCormick then suggested that the following committees be appointed during the conference in order to initiate the structure of a much needed national organization:

- A. Organization
- B. Patronage and Appointments
- C. Statement to the President

Telegrams from the following persons and organizations were read:

E. B. Duarte, Brownsville, Texas
40th A.D. MAPA, Los Angeles, Calif.
Gilbert D. Lopez, Fresno, Calif.
Filo Sedillo, New Mexico
Phone call from John Lozano

Ed Roybal remarks: (Councilman, City of Los Angeles; State Chairman, Viva Kennedy Clubs of California; State Chairman, MAPA of California)

After motion was made and seconded that speeches be limited to 5 minutes, and having been passed unanimously, he proceeded to thank Carlos McCormick for his excellent job from the time of the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles until the calling of this meeting. He suggested that the excellent remarks of Mr. McCormick be reproduced and sent to each and everyone in attendance at the matting.

After last night's informal conversation, we Californians find that all other states are as displeased as we are with the appointments on the part of Mr. Kennedy. We find no consolation and for that reason we must do something concrete about it. We will all continue to be Democrats and must be united at all times. For this reason we must organize a vehicle for our and this vehicle must be a national organization to develop a coordinating structure for our national political activity. Mr. McCormick's effort on behalf of our people can be made more effective by assigning him an official title in Washington. The need of a national organization is a matter of survival. We must create a system of assessment in order to raise the necessary monies to organize and coordinate. The jealousies within our groups must be systematically eradicated. A letter containing a statement of our policy should be directed to the President especially to let him know that the Spanish-speaking Americans are united. In California we have the serious problem of not having at least one Congressman or Senator who would like to see our people united. For this reason we must unite ourselves, for together we can do a much better job for our people.

At this point, the Chairman of the meeting directed Mr. Louis Diaz, former Mayor of Pico-Rivera, California, to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. McCormick stated that there is a VIVA KENNEDY MARCH recorded by the U.S. Army Band and a CORRIDO VIVA KENNEDY recorded by a Mariachi Group from Miami, Florida.

John Mendoza remarks: (District Attorney, Clark County in Las Vegas, Nevada; State Chairman, Viva Kennedy Clubs of Nevada; National Vice-Chairman, American GI Forum of U.S.)

The population of Mexican-Americans in Nevada is very small. Out of 40,000 voters in Clark County, about 1,500 are Mexican-Americans. Our problems are peculiar. Very few qualified Mexican-Americans and very few interested in becoming politically articulate. There are several Mexican-Americans in the Central Committee of Clark County. Politics in the State of Nevada are what you might call gut-fighting. Therefore you need to be astute and forceful.

National format very much needed to have the state organizations concentrate on local organization, campaigning, and problems. I agree with the statements made by Councilman Roybal especially regarding unity and coordination. The national organization must in no way eliminate existing organizations.

Lino Lopez remarks: (Human Relations Commission of Denver, Colorado; State Vice-Chairman, Viva Kennedy Clubs of Colorado)

Not having been invited I did not prepare any remarks (statement made in good spirit). The State of Colorado has about 170,000 Spanish surname voters. Viva Kennedy was responsible for the historic turnout of the Spanish surname voter to the last election. Very rewarding to have been appointed to speak on behalf of Viva Kennedy in Rocky Ford where the voters in general never get excited politically, much less the S-S ones. Five years ago the S-S children could not go

into some public playgrounds and swimming pools. Although the majority of the Spanish-Speaking people are laborers and the meeting was held during the week, about 300 people came to the dinner meeting. I spoke for Mr. Kennedy. The Viva Kennedy movement represented to this people, a drive to liberate them from some sort of oppression. I participated in a rally in San Luis Valley at Monte Vista. There are people who have been born there and lived there for 50 and 60 years who had never seen the inside of the hotel where the rally was held. These people were in the area before other ethnic groups arrived and yet they have had little or no say so regarding their social-political existence. Negro and Spanish-speaking are living in privation in Greeley, Colorado. Only three or four years ago "NO MEXICANS OR DOGS ALLOWED" signs were displayed in various parts of the State. This is the case in the third wealthiest county in the Nation. Fortunately, not too long ago, the Marquee in the Jr. Chamber of Commerce displayed a sign with the following inscription "WELCOME LATIN AMERICANS".

Recently, a typical mother in the state made the following remark, "I have never voted. I have 5 boys and girls who have never voted, but we are going to vote for Frank Torrez this time". This has been the sad case of our people in Colorado.

We will be failing our duty to some 5 to 6 Million Americans if we do not come out of this meeting with definite intentions at the very least to set up a National Organization to capitalize on the interest generated by Viva Kennedy within our people.

Al Pena's remarks: (Bexar County Commissioner, San Antonio, Texas, State Chairman, Viva Kennedy of Texas, State Chairman, MAPA of Texas)

I was only Mexican-American Democratic Delegate from Texas to the Natl. Convention. I did not get there by being a nice Mexican-American. Hard work amongst M.A. in Bexar County. At the Convention I was appalled to find out that we were the only group not represented in the Platform Committee. We have two National organizations and neither was represented. I am not criticizing, just telling you facts. Cold facts. I called Mennen Williams and he invited me. I told them amongst other things that our people vote Democratic by at least 98%.

When we talked to Carlos McCormick about working for Viva Kennedy, we did under two conditions: we expected recognition, not through L.B.J., not through Yarbrough, not through the Governor, because Texas Demos have sold us partly down the river. We want Sen. now Pres. Kennedy to do it. The promise was made, but not kept. We are disappointed.

I propose that we set up a NON-PARTISAN National Organization. We should not be in anybody's pocket. The reason: we have received only two appointments in Texas and not through efforts of Viva Kennedy, because we have been circumvented.

Henry Gonzalez is running for the vacated Senate seat of LBJ. He needs our help and I would like to request your contributions for him. If we can elect him, we will get the recognition we need. (Collection taken up for Senator Gonzalez.)

McCormick stated that Rossellini of Washington State ran with money raised amongst Italians in New York.

Henry Lopez remarks: (Natl. Cord. Viva Kennedy Clubs)

Henry Gonzalez is not running in Texas. He is running in the United States. Several times has been a symbol and inspiration to the Spanish-speaking. Article in Coronet called him the "Fighting Texan". He was the most sought for speaker in Viva Kennedy.

Man with tremendous courage. He knows he would not win on his courageous Fight for Civil Rights but he knew the value of LBJ, RFK and Schwelb. He did it for the people.

buster for Civil Rights, but he knew the value of the Press, Radio and TV. He did it for us, for you and I.

My Tocayo, is one of 71 candidates for the Senatorial Seat. If he should be on the run-off against a Republican, the LBJs and the Kennedys will be in a hell of a dilemma. They may find that perhaps they will reluctantly have to support a Democrat. Give hard. Give all you can for Henry Gonzalez's cause, our cause.

Gane Marin remarks:

Through Goldwaters activity, we now have a strong influx of Republicans where once we had a 60% Democratic community in Maricopa County. The Press is violently Republican from the Editorial policy on down to the news.

For some reason we are not working together. We did a survey of some 21 Spanish speaking organizations. They are social, cultural, civic, welfare, etc., doing a commendable job. However, we find that in at least 10 points in the constitutions of each organization, they all concur. They all stand for the same thing basically, but they are all bidding for the same members, for the same monies, for the same effort. If we are to defeat our opposition, we must be united. I whole-heartedly agree with the NONPARTISAN approach.

Our movement must appeal to the 2nd. and 3rd. generation who will be doing a great amount of the work. It must be us who set the pattern and who must guide them.

Motion by Hr. Hector Garcia to elect Convention Chmn. and special Committees. Bonilla seconded. Discussed and the YES have it.

Carlos McCormick was unanimously elected ss Chairman. Nominated by Garcia, sec.-by Roybal. Louis Dias moved for collsing of nominations, sec. by A. Rodriguez, Motion to convert the Conference into Convention. Seconded and carried unanim. carried after limited discussion.

Hr. Hector Garcia remarks: (Founder, American GI Forum of the U.S., Natl. Vice-Chmn. Viva Kennedy Clubs, Co-Founder MAPA of Texas)

I am grateful for work done by Carlos McCormick on behalf of our people. I am grateful to President Kennedy for high honor bestowed upon me and my people when he appointed me Signatory to the International Agreement on his behalf.

I am a doctor. I diagnose, study, treat and operate when necessary. I speak honestly, I have to tell you the truth. I am very unhappy. The Kennedys promised several meetings with us, which they never kept. We went ahead and did the work and you know the results of our Viva Kennedy work throughout the country. The appointments of people from Texas were made without our consultation. I think that there is collusion that goes beyond the Congressional Representatives from Texas.

It is very strange, that my appointment and other Viva Kennedy appointments never hit the press. Why? Did you know that the Texas Press never came out with any of the Viva Kennedy appointments during the campaign? Why? Did you know that they wanted to push Mr. Tijerina, an Eisenhower Republican on us? Why?

In the case of the Hon. Judge Salinas recommended by us and several other organizations, he did not get appointed to the Federal Judgeship. Why?

Rynaldo Garza, a judge from Laredo, Texas, a Republican who voted against Henry Gonzalez GOT THE APPOINTMENT. WHY?

Johnson never consults with us. We expected it. Bob Kennedy had something to do with this. Why? Yarbrough chickened out.

My feeling is that nobody in this country of ours wants us to get organized. We have a King. The King is LA RAZA. We must get organized, or else the KING will perish. We must sacrifice, We must fight and struggle until our King, LA RAZA is respected; recognized and taken into account.

Is Bob Kennedy interested in seeing the Mexican-American organized?
Does our President want for us to get organized?

You may not like what I say, but it is the truth and truth must be served. I SEE COLLUSION OVER, ABOVE AND BEYOND TEXAS SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN. Let us know and remember at all times that we are now locked in a battle with the men of great power in our country. But they too can be defeated. United Strength alone will do it. A NATIONAL, POLITICAL, NON-PARTISAN ORGANIZATION will do it.

"A ti tambien te han usado Carlitos. Y te quiero como lhermano. Necesitamos estar unidos. No hay diferencia entre los Tejanos, Californianos y Neoyorkinos de habla hispana, sobre to o porque todos sufrimos o cajeamos del mismo pie. Nos han usado. But we must do smething about it, and we start right here, right now".

Julius Castelan made some remarks concerning conditions of Mexican-American in California especially in San Francisco and in the Northern part of the state. He stated that Gov. Brown has made some appointments of Mexican-Americans. Repremended McCormick for his lack of results and stated that he could be replaced. However, that we need him and that we know he can produce.

The following Committes were named:

ORGANIZATION AND PROGRAM - Hector Garcia, Al Pena and Henry Lopez. (Rose Room)

PATRONAGE- Ed Roybal, Atty. De Anda and Fred Marquez. (In this Room)

DRAFTING OF STATEMENT TO PRESIDENT- Al Pena, Lino Lopez, Tony Tinajero, Barragan
Ex Officio- Chmn. of two other Committees.

NAME OF ORGANIZATION- Bob Sanchez, Castelan, Barragan, Meneses, etc.

Committee work will commence after lunch and will end at 3 p.m. at which time the General Session will meet here. Reports will be presented, discussion will follow and nominations and election of officers will follow the voting on all the motions on recommendations based on Committee Reports.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ORGANIZATION- Dr. Garcia.

Preamble: Political, Non-Partisan, National organization. Officers: President, 4 Vice-Pres., Sec., Tres. and Exec.Sec. Board of all above plus 2 reps. from each State. Board meets twice a year. May call special meets. Vertical type organization. That MAPA in Calif. and Texas and any other existing organization be part of that sState's organization along with anyother type of membership in the state.

Motion by Pena that report be accepted, Seconded and carried.

NAME OF ORGANIZATION- Atty. Bob Sanchez.

Propossed names: MAPA -Mexican-Americans for Political Action.

NAPAPA- National Association of Phamericans for Political Action
PAOPA- Pan American Organization for Political Action.

COMMENTS

The name must be a universal name to include all the spanish-speaking people in the country. Organization is not a Federation of organizations but a National organization of Federated State organizations. The State organizations will be made up of individual members and not representatives of organizations, clubs or groups to prevent the control of anyone group or faction. Colorado does not go for Mexican-American. Texas willing to change the name MAPA in favor of the National name. If we leave Convention without a name, we are evading the issue. MAPA of California nor anyother organization is in no position to speak officially without authority from said group.

The internal California problem of MAPA of California is a state matter and should not be discussed here. Their State convention should take up their problems.

Motion by Bob Sanchez, seconded by Hank Lopez that organization be a Vertical type non-confederation organization. Unanimously passed.

Motion by Roybal that Mexican American Political Association be the name or organization. Seconded by Dr. Rodriguez. Comments: Hevia in support of motion. Arriola-against it. Poblano-Against it. Matinez-Against it. Moreno- In favor because it is useful in organizing the Southwest. Bob Sanchez- Against it. Many well to do Mexicans and some with influence do not like the connotation of the term. Hank Lopez for MAPA- Whatever name the politician will call us MEXICANS. Puerto Ricans want to go on their own in New York. They have more muscle. They will not join us. Mairn-No place for selection of name. Bonilla- Against Motion. Mendoza-Against Motion. Convention is loaded with MAPA of Calif. Not fair. If I had known I would have brought a train load of Viva Kennedy. An we carried Nevada for Kennedy. McCormick-, Against MAPA. Lopez's contention of Puerto Rican is not correct. Mainlanders are not same as Islanders and Mainlanders have not been recognized. Very important that name be all inclusive. Tinajero- Against name. A greater number of presently non-MAPA members who would be interested in National organization and program who would otherwise not be interested. Name is very exclusive of other Hispanic-Americans.

VOTING RESULT: 18 in Favor. 28 Against Motion Defeated

Adjourned for Caucus on Name of Organization.

Reconvened and voted on names proposed:

LAPA- Latin Americans for Political American Association.

PASO- Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations.

Voting Results: LAPA- 19 PASO- 23

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Roybal moved nomination of Dr. Garcia as National President. Unanimous Acclamation. Ed Roybal elected 1st. Vice-Pres. Dr. Garcia asked for nominations for 3 more Natl. Vice-Pres. Dr. Raimundo Rodriguez, John Mendoza and Gene Marin elected. Hank Lopez elected Secretary. Poblano and Tinajero were nominated. President Garcia appointed James De Anda his Corresponding Secretary. Filo Cedillo of New Mexico was elected Treasurer.. Carlos McCormick was unanimously elected Executive Secretary.

National Board Meeting was set for Las Vegas, Nevada for late in April. First National Convention in Los Angeles in August or September. States to send proxy if Reps. can not go. States without organizations will be assigned Reps. by appointment by Natl. Pres. Those with organizations will have names sent in to Natl. Pres. who will appoint the Reps. on State's recommendation.