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MEMPHIS, TENN., THURSDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 4, 1969

New L.Q.C. Lamar Society Puts Stock In Famous Name

By WILLIAM B. STREET

The newest organization formed to study Southern problems has adopted the L.Q.C. Lamar Society as its name and there may be some significance attached.

The group, which won't actually come into formal being until November, apparently anticipates vocal opposition to its stated aims and a severe line of questioning from avowed conservatives over whether the membership is qualified to lead.

Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar, fully recognized as one of the most illustrious of Mississippians, experienced the same difficulty.

Lamar was statesman enough and practical politician enough to offset adverse criticism as he pursued the course he thought best for a South beset by all the problems of Reconstruction.

It would seem, under the circumstances, that the founders of the L.Q.C. Lamar Society hope to draw upon the same abilities in their own project.



L.Q.C. Lamar

W. J. Michael Cody, a young Memphis attorney and member of the Shelby County Democratic Executive Committee, is one of the founders. Another is Dr. Thomas H. Naylor, a Duke University professor who hails from Jackson, Miss.

Hodding Carter III, Greenville, Miss., newspaper editor and Democrat loyalist, and Mississippi-born Willie Morris, author and editor, will be two of the principal speakers when the society is formally created Nov. 21-23 at Quail Roost Conference Center near Durham, N.C.

The prospectus says: "It is the object of the L.Q.C. Lamar Society to capitalize on the talents of some of the South's more promising future leaders by creating a non-political, non-partisan organization which can bring together native Southerners who are committed to finding practical solutions to some of the South's problems."

"During the past 20 years," says the prospectus, "public officials in the South have spent so much time and energy fighting integration and the federal government that very little attention has been devoted to attempts to solve some of the South's many problems."

Among problems listed are low wages and per capita income, rural poverty, unemployment, poor housing, an inadequate educational system, population growth among families which can least afford it and inadequate planning by state and local governments.

Disclosure of the idea for the organization a couple of months ago brought an encouraging response locally, said Mr. Cody, and, of course, there were also warning signals in the form of calls and letters which said, in effect, that "I can manage my own life without help from Mike Cody."

The prospectus declares that "the organization shall include independents, Republicans and Democrats. The common bond among its members shall not be ideological in nature, but rather a common desire to see the South achieve its full potential."

Mr. Cody and the other sponsors are not under the delusion, however, that anything meaningful can be achieved without the element of politics.

The adoption of the Lamar name is interesting. As a memory refresher, Lamar was a firebrand preceding the War Between the States and, afterward, served as dean of the University of Mississippi Law School three years, as a United States senator, as secretary of the interior, and as an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court.

His eulogy in the Senate upon the death of abolitionist Charles Sumner of Massachusetts drew wide acclaim in the North and shocked the sensibilities of his constituents back home. It also earned him a chapter in President Kennedy's "Profiles in Courage."

In the contested Hayes-Tilden presidential election, Lamar, a Democrat, helped engineer the election of Republican Rutherford B. Hayes, and thereby took the calculated risk of political extinction in Mississippi. It developed that Lamar used his services in exchange for Hayes' promise to withdraw occupation troops from the South.

In both the Sumner eulogy and the Hayes election, Lamar had to defend himself from concentrated political attack at home, and he did so with ability and distinction.

Perhaps, in the matter of name selection, Mr. Cody and the other founders are looking hopefully, for comparison.