

For Release Wednesday, April 2, 1941

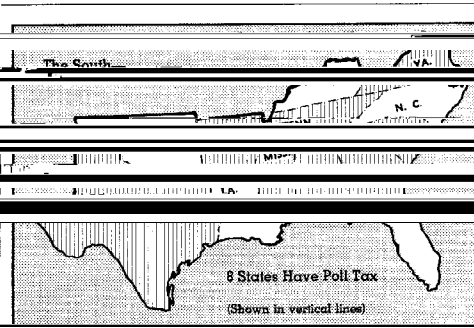
The Poll Tax Issue

First Study of Public Opinion On Poll Tax Issue Completed By Institute in National Survey

is Opposed to Abolition, but Nation As a Whole Wants to Lift Restriction

Director, American Institute of Public Opinion

PRINCETON, N. J., Apr. 1.—One of the political problems being widely discussed throughout the South is the question of abolishing poll taxes which are still a requirement for voting in eight Southern states.



8 States Have Poll Tax

(Shown in vertical lines)

Campaigns headed by civic and

peal the poll

have paid their poll taxes and are

Carolina formerly levied poll taxes

By paying a few dollars poll tax,



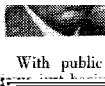
has been introduced in Congress by Rep. Governor of California to keep the

the 8 poll tax states combined:

POLL TAX STATES (Vote of Persons Who Have Paid Their Poll Tax)

The average tax in the 8 states with poll tax requirements is about \$1.75. In some states the taxes are cumulative so that a voter might

to own property. Contrary to popular impression, the present poll tax system in the South is of comparatively recent origin, dating back only to the



requirement for voting in Federal elections. With public discussion of the

The survey also included, however, persons of voting age who, through failure to pay the poll tax, are not eligible to vote. When

In the early days of the Republic only people who owned property could vote. Poll taxes were adopted in those days as a

chiefly as a means of combatting the popularity of the Populist Party among poor whites in the South.

the anti-poll tax campaign, both in the poll tax states as a group and throughout the rest of the

(Persons Who Have Paid Poll Tax Combined With Those Who Have Not) FOR ABOLISHING POLL TAX 35%

Here are some of the arguments on the poll tax which were

to measure the trends of sentiment on this issue. Today's survey results reveal

percentages apply to the 8 poll tax states as a whole, and are not

A 76-year-old farmer in Hazen, Ark., expressed his opinion to Institute interviewer Bess Lay

ment." FOR RETAINING THE TAX

while, a large majority of voters are in favor of abolishing all existing poll taxes.

2. In the 13 Southern states public opinion is of mixed complexion on the issue. In the five Southern states which have already abolished poll taxes, or never had them, a majority wants to see them repealed in the other parts of the South where poll taxes are still

states.

How Rest of Nation Feels

The next aspect of the question is—what is the sentiment of the rest of the South (the five non-poll tax states), and of the country as a whole?

Here are the findings of the survey on that score:

just put on and run over the people."

Over in De Valls Bluff, Ark., another farmer felt the poll tax system encouraged political corruption. He told an Institute interviewer:

"It's gotten so rotten the way they purchase those poll taxes that the whole poll tax system ought to be done away

tain the poll tax:

"I'll gladly help pay for the schools and keep the Negroes from voting."

A 30-year-old insurance agent in Virginia, expressing an attitude held by many voters in the survey, said:

"We ought to keep the poll tax because when you pay a tax

Mississippi, South Carolina,

these poll taxes should be abolished?"

VOTE IN 5 SOUTHERN STATES WITH NO POLL TAX FOR ABOLISHING POLL TAX 51% FOR RETAINING POLL TAX 36% NO OPINION 13

some people pay a poll tax while others in other states don't have to."

A 37-year-old bookkeeper in the

were many people who wouldn't be able to vote intelligently. He said:

"Better keep the poll tax because if we don't have it