

Wilbert Lee O'Daniel Bio

Wilbert Lee O'Daniel was born in Malta, Ohio, on 11th March, 1890. His father died in an accident soon after his birth and his mother moved the family to Reno County, Kansas. After graduating from Salt City Business College he became a stenographer for a flour-milling company in Anthony, Kansas. Later he became a sales manager in a company in Kingman. He also worked in Kansas City and New Orleans.

In 1925 O'Daniel moved to Forth Worth where he became sales manager of the Burrus Mills. This included running the company's radio advertising. O'Daniel wrote scripts and songs and eventually created the Light Crust Doughboys to perform on radio.

O'Daniel, a member of the **Democratic Party**, decided to try and become governor of Texas in 1938. Accompanied by his band, the Hillbilly Boys, he attracted large audiences to his meetings. During his campaign he promised to raise old age pensions and to abolish capital punishment, the poll tax and the sales tax. After winning office he reneged on all these promises. He also tried to introduce a sales tax that had been drawn up by a group of industrialists.

O'Daniel was expected to be defeated by Miriam A. Ferguson in 1940 but gained important publicity when he announced he had informed Franklin D. Roosevelt that he had discovered a communist conspiracy in Texas. After his election nothing more was said about this matter and no one was arrested for this conspiracy.

In 1941 O'Daniel introduced anti-trade union legislation. Most of these laws were eventually overturned by the courts. He also began attacking Homer Price Rainey, the president of the University of Texas. After he fired Rainey he was condemned by the American Association of University Professors.

Later that year he defeated Lyndon Baines Johnson in the race to become a member of the Senate. Over the next few years he and his fellow Texan, Tom Connally, tended to support the conservative Republican-Southern Democratic coalition.

In 1944 he joined forces with Martin Dies, Eugene B. Germany and Hugh R. Cullen to establish the **Texas Regulars**. These were a group of right-wing members of the **Democratic Party** who opposed the liberal policies of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Supported by Texas oilmen, the group were also opposed to the fixed prices of oil and gas imposed by Roosevelt's government during the **Second World War**. They also campaigned against the **New Deal**, civil rights and pro-trade union legislation. The group disbanded after they failed to remove Roosevelt as the leader of their party.

O'Daniel was also opposed to Harry S. Truman and his Fair Deal proposals that included legislation on civil rights, fair employment practices, opposition to lynching and improvements in existing public welfare laws. When Truman won the nomination, O'Daniel joined the States' Rights Democratic Party (Dixiecrats) and Storm Thurmond was chosen as its presidential candidate. It was thought that with two former Democrats, Thurmond and Henry Wallace standing, Truman would have difficulty defeating the **Republican Party** candidate, Thomas Dewey. However, both Thurmond and Wallace did badly and Truman defeated Dewey by 24,105,812 votes to 21,970,065.

With public opinion polls showing little support for O'Daniel, he decided to retire from politics in 1948. He retired to a ranch near Forth Worth. O'Daniel was totally opposed to desegregating America's schools and claimed that communists had gained control of the **Supreme Court**.

Wilbert Lee O'Daniel died on 12th May, 1969.

(<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/JFKodaniel.htm>)