To Editor of The Easley Progress:

It was my privilege just recently to spend a week-end at Table Rock State Park in Pickens County in company with Legislative representatives from Pickens and other counties. The things I saw there impressed me so greatly that I cannot resist the opportunity of taking this method of informing the general public of the value of the asset which they are developing, and thereby indirectly expressing my appreciation to my esteemed colleague, Senator Fred Williams, and the progressive Representatives in the House from Pickens County, Mr. J. T. Black and Mr. W. B. Davis, for the splendid entertainment provided upon that occasion.

I have, of course, known in a general way that South Carolina had some mountain areas. I admit, however, and I believe this is true with regard to a large percentage of South Carolina’s population, that I had no idea as to the extent of that mountain area, nor of the grandeur found within it, such as we found at Table Rock State Park. There, as the result of the farsightedness and splendid vision of your present Legislative Delegation and other members who have been representing your County, 2800 acres of beautiful mountain land have been set aside as a State Park with a view to the preservation of the scenic and historic interests and dedicated to the recreation of our people — not just the people from Pickens County but the people of all of South Carolina and even of other States.

Here is an area that will never again be devastated by the lumbermen but which will be retained forever to show future generations what real forests look like. The area itself is outstanding in its
magnificence, its grandeur, and the beauty of its foliage. It contains Pinnacle Mountain rising to an elevation of 3400 feet above sea level - the highest point in the State of South Carolina.

Table Rock Mountain itself is a magnificent thing with a gigantic granite cliff rising perpendicularly for 1,000 feet and serving as an ample background for the rolling green foothills beneath.

The development, completed, under construction and planned under the jurisdiction of the State Commission of Forestry and the National Park Service, has been designed to detract in the very minimum from the natural beauties represented upon the area itself. They include a thirty-acre lake of crystal clear water in which may be seen the reflection of the granite rock. Vacation cabins, which will be available to the rich and poor alike, at prices well within reach of the average pocketbook, have been constructed upon the shores of the lake. A beautiful picnic shelter surrounded by rustic fire places and table and bench combinations is found in a secluded spot close by the lake shore and not far from the location of a proposed bathhouse and bathing beach. Nature study trails/hiking paths extend from the intensive use area along mountain streams closed in with rhododendrom and laurel, to the very top of Table Rock Mountain from which splendid views may be obtained of the mountains to the North and the semi-mountain and agricultural regions to the South. Pure water is piped from springs high in the mountain and sanitary facilities are found at all picnic areas and all places where people congregate. A fish hatchery is under construction which will provide fish under the jurisdiction of the State Game Department in order to keep well stocked for fishing purposes the beautiful mountain lake.
The need for State Parks is a social and educational one. Continued decrease in the hours of labor are prophesied by our social and economic leaders. This raises the question as to the use of that increased leisure time by the American people and particularly by young Americans. There is a need for areas such as this in order to provide wholesome outdoor recreation for our people. Mr. H. A. Smith, State Forester, has manifested a deep interest in the establishment of our State Parks and is due much commendation for his splendid work along this line.

My week-end in the mountains of Pickens County was a revelation to me as to this phase of the conservation of our natural resources, and I am particularly indebted to Senator Williams and Mr. Black and Mr. Davis for the privilege of having secured first-hand information upon this program.

I am told that over 365,000 people used the State Parks of South Carolina up until September 12 of this year. I predict that this is only the beginning, as our people find out the beauties of these areas and the possibilities for wholesome recreation contained within them, as they appreciate more and more the need for providing an answer to the social questions which are already arising, as the tenant farmer and the mill village people learn that these areas are for their use, then I am sure indeed that the people of Pickens County and of South Carolina will be doubly grateful to the vision of these men who have helped to make State Parks possible.

Sincerely,

J. STROM THURMOND
Senator, Edgefield County