STATEMENT OF GOVERNOR J. STROM THURMOND

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WILLIE EARLE LYNCHING CASE

March 1, 1947

On behalf of the people of South Carolina and myself, I want to commend the law enforcement officers who worked on the recent lynching. The thorough and expeditious manner in which this case was solved should be an example to all law enforcement agencies throughout the country. Nothing can do more to deter crime in the future in the State. I wish to commend Sheriff W. H. Mauldin and his deputies of Pickens County, Sheriff R. H. Bearden and his deputies of Greenville County, Chief J. H. Jennings and the Greenville City Police, Captain G. R. Richardson and members of the State Constabulary who were assigned to the case, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and all others who participated.

To my knowledge, this is the first case of this nature which has resulted in the apprehension of all those suspected of participation in the crime. I am sure that the people of South Carolina join me in my commendation of the work which has been done.

In so far as investigation and arrests are concerned, this case is virtually completed. The law enforcement branch of our state government has done its duty well. It is now a matter for the courts.
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The case of Willie Earle is not only regrettable, but is a blot on the State of South Carolina. I have ordered Chief Joel Townsend of the State Constabulary to use every facility at his disposal until this case has been completely solved. He has been given the authority to call in as many constables as he needs. This is the first such incident in South Carolina in about twenty years, and I am determined to do everything within my power to hold those involved responsible to the courts of this State. This crime is a disgrace to the State and it is a shame that the decent people of South Carolina must bear this infamy. The people of this State do not condone mob rule, and every effort will be made to apprehend the persons responsible for this atrocity. Such offenses against decency, law and the democratic way of living will not be tolerated by the law abiding citizens of this State. Mob rule is against every principle for which we have so recently sacrificed so much, and we expect to combat it with the same determination.

Given to Press
February 18, 1947
March 1, 1947

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