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South Carolina General Assembly

Strom Thurmond

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Gentlemen of the General Assembly:

When the 87th General Assembly convened last January, it was the prayerful hope of all mankind that by 1948 the peace of the world would have been established.

Unhappily that hope has proved to be a vain one. We must face the harsh reality that we are as far from world peace today as we were a year ago. We have seen one of our principal allies in the recent war pursue a consistent course of action which causes all peace-loving nations grave concern.

The peoples of the world still yearn for peace. Our own people are united in their determination that the political and economic aggression of the Soviet Union shall be halted. We did not sacrifice our youth and resources in the winning of the war only to stand by and allow another totalitarian regime to dominate the world.

We are now employing our resources to help weak and unfortunate peoples rehabilitate themselves and grow strong enough to resist the militant advance of Communism. This is a contribution to peace; it is practical insurance against another war.

The handling of the delicate and critical problems involved in these matters of national policy is, of course, in the hands of the leaders of our government in Washington. Theirs is a grave responsibility, because they must ever be mindful of the necessity of keeping America strong, while aiding a bankrupt and despoiled world. We cannot pour our resources into Europe and Asia in such quantities as to undermine our own economy.

A strong America is the last hope of the peace-loving peoples of the world, and it is inconceivable that we shall fail to safeguard our own economy while striving to improve world economy.

We can play a vital part in the economic struggle in which our nation is now engaged on all fronts. It is our duty to fortify the nation's economic strength for the fight by placing and keeping our own governmental and economic house in order. (Strong States make a strong United States.) The better our State Government, and the stronger the economic resources of our people, the greater will be our contribution toward sustaining the nation's economic power for peace.

In my Inaugural Address to you a year ago I outlined a broad and comprehensive program for the upbuilding of South Carolina. There is no need for me to repeat
what I said then. That address has been circulated into every community of the State and it embodies the objectives of our administration. This program to improve the character and efficiency of our State Government has won the support of the people of South Carolina since it was launched from the State House steps a year ago.

We have done much during the past 12 months to improve government in South Carolina. To a large extent, this has been achieved by cooperation between the Legislative and the Executive branches of the government. A continuation of this spirit of cooperation and joint effort will be the surest guaranty of achieving streamlined government to meet our present-day responsibilities.

2. GOVERNMENTAL REORGANIZATION

One of our greatest obligations to those we are now privileged to represent is to make the State Government the workable instrument of public service which the people rightfully expect it to be.

No one can contend, with sincerity, that our government is such an instrument today. Since the Constitution of 1895 was ordained, State functions have been expanded to meet the needs of the people as they developed, and new boards, departments and commissions have, from time to time, been added to our governmental structure. You and I know from experience that they lack efficient coordination, and often overlap or duplicate the functions of other agencies.

The result is bewildering to our citizens who have occasion to come to the seat of their government seeking its services. The tax burden which they are called upon to bear for its maintenance is out of proportion to its efficiency. We do not need 109 separate agencies, functioning without logical coordination, to administer our public affairs. An intelligent effort to solve this problem of integration will reduce the cost of our government while actually expanding its usefulness to the people.

At the last session of the General Assembly, a bill to bring about, in a tried and proven manner, a reorganization of the State Government was passed by the House of Representatives, but reached the Senate too late for consideration by that body. It is my hope that this measure will be one of the earliest handled at the present session.

This bill does not delegate to the Reorganization Commission any legislative power. It declares the law under which the Commission will act, and merely leaves to the Commission the function of finding the facts in any particular case and of
proposing reorganization plans in the light of the facts so found. This bill is similar in all relevant particulars to the reorganization acts which the Congress of the United States has passed to streamline the national government. The Congress can do only what the Constitution gives it the power to do. Our Legislature can do anything which our Constitution does not prohibit. Certainly this type of legislation, which was within the limited powers of the Congress, is well within the full and plenary powers of our General Assembly.

The problem of reorganization will sooner or later have to be faced and solved. I know of no better time to do it than now. We have in the Legislature many Senators and Representatives who, through actual experience with the operation of the State Government, can now render to South Carolina patriotic and useful service on the Reorganization Commission and thus repay the people for the high privilege of serving in our Legislative halls.

This General Assembly is exceptionally well qualified to carry the whole matter to a successful conclusion. It is with confidence in your recognition of the need and your determination to do the job that I call to your attention this important legislation, and leave it in your hands.

3. ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE 1947 SESSION

You made substantial progress, during your last session, toward accomplishing the four-year program upon which we embarked together last January. Much more was done in that session than was generally realized at the time. It was my privilege, shortly after your adjournment last May, to report to the people in a radio address the accomplishments of that legislative session and to pay tribute to the things you did to further South Carolina's progress.

These accomplishments are again set out in Appendix I of this message, and you may well review this record with keen satisfaction. It is a record of sound progress in the fields of education, health, public welfare, public safety, agriculture, liquor taxation, constructive investment of surplus funds, prudent handling of the public revenues, and in other matters affecting directly the lives and well-being of our people. It is a record which challenges you to press onward in the weeks to come in the consideration of the program laid before you last year.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

I have listed in Appendix II a number of other recommendations which were included
In this program, and I again urge you to give them your thoughtful attention at this session.

In addition, I also submit for your consideration the following:

1. I recommend the passage of an act to empower the Governor to fill vacancies, however occurring, in any office in the Executive branch of the government when the General Assembly is not in session, whether the position was originally filled by election or appointment. There is a distinct omission in our law in this particular which efficiency in the administration of the public's business requires us to supply, and the power to make recess appointments should be clarified and confirmed by the necessary legislation.

2. I recommend that the General Assembly continue in effect the graduated liquor surtax enacted at the last session. This measure proved to be a regulatory as well as a taxing measure. It contributed to a reduction in liquor consumption, an increase in liquor revenues, a forcing back of liquor handling from illegal dealers to the licensed dealers, and the channeling of the excessive profits of the liquor industry into the State Treasury.

3. I recommend, as a constructive step in our industrial expansion program, that the General Assembly create a committee consisting of representatives of management, labor and the Legislature to study the general subject of labor-management relations, and make progressive recommendations looking to furthering the wholesome situation which we have thus far enjoyed in this field. Stability of industrial relations will be an increasingly important factor in determining whether substantial industries locate in South Carolina, as well as whether the skilled workers, needed by these industries will be able to make their homes here.

4. I recommend the building of a new and modern penitentiary. Because of more rigid law enforcement and discontinuance of the abuse of clemency, crowded conditions exist at the penitentiary. The prison population is over 200 in excess of what it was a year ago. As a result of the efficient administration of Colonel Wyndham M. Manning, who was appointed superintendent of the penitentiary on my recommendation, steps have been taken to alleviate many of the horrible conditions at our present antiquated plant. I urge the Legislature to give special consideration to this pressing problem and provide adequate facilities to deal with it. We can no longer be satisfied merely to imprison our criminals. Human decency demands that we use modern knowledge
and facilities to reclaim them, and whenever possible send them back to their homes and families improved in mind and spirit, and trained in useful occupations.

5. I recommend the establishment of an industrial school for Negro girls. Experience proves such an institution to be vitally needed, both in the enforcement of the laws and the rehabilitation of the unfortunate.

6. I recommend the passage of a State-wide law creating County Boards of Health and County Health Departments to provide a unified system of health control throughout the State.

7. I recommend that a formula be devised for the distribution of Federal funds which are to be available for County Health Departments, taking into consideration the population, and the financial and health needs of each County.

8. I recommend that there be established, under the direction of the State Hospital,
a clinic for treatment of the disease of alcoholism and that an educational and information program be conducted to educate the public on alcoholism as a disease.

9. I recommend that a commission be created to study the South Carolina Code of Laws, and the acts passed since the adoption of the Code, with a view of recommending the repeal of obsolete laws, the removal of inconsistencies in the law, and the clarification of ambiguous provisions.

10. I recommend the establishment of a system of State markets for agricultural products to insure our farmers a ready market and better profits. We must be ever mindful that the farmer remains the backbone of our economy and we must do whatever is necessary to stabilize his economy.

11. I recommend that the General Assembly adopt a concurrent resolution urging the Secretary of Agriculture to expedite the cottonseed testing project being conducted by the Federal Government at the Stoneville Experiment Station in Mississippi. We found at a special meeting I called here last fall that our farmers badly need a means of determining the quality of their cottonseed on a bale basis at the gin, in order to receive a just price for this valuable product.

12. I recommend increased aid for further development of library service to the end that South Carolina will have a system of County and regional libraries extending throughout the State, in order to provide this service to the 30% of our people who are without it.

13. I recommend that the necessary legislation be passed to permit State matching of Federal funds to provide further development of aviation facilities in South Carolina.

14. I recommend the establishment of new State parks in thinly-populated areas not now provided with such facilities.

15. I recommend the enactment of legislation enlarging the power of the State Public Service Commission to compel telephone companies to provide adequate service under their franchises.

16. I recommend that the Probation, Parole and Pardon Board be legally authorized and empowered to review cases in which sentences of less than one year have been imposed, if requested to do so by the Governor.

17. I recommend that our legal holidays be reviewed, and such changes made as
expedient at this time, and I especially recommend that the day after
Christmas be declared a bank holiday in order that the bank employees may
enjoy such day during that festive season of the year.

I recommend that a study be made to obtain better utilization of space in
the State office buildings to the end of reducing to a minimum the nec-
esesity for renting outside space, and that such modern practices as micro-
 filming of records and papers be considered in such study.

I recommend that all agencies of the State Government be required to submit
to the Budget Commission a list of all positions in such agencies not listed
in the Appropriation Bill, together with the names of persons filling them
and the salaries of each, and whether the compensation is derived from State
or Federal funds.

I recommend that legislation be enacted ending the drawing by a State em-
ployee of compensation from more than one State source, except with the
approval of the Budget Commission.

I recommend that a fair maximum daily allowance for official travel expense
be fixed, and that actual expenses, not exceeding the maximum, be paid instead of the present flat daily allowance.

I recommend that the Retirement Act be reviewed by proper legislative
committees with the view of clarifying certain ambiguous provisions, such
as whether per diem should be considered as salary for determining retire-
ment benefits.

I recommend that you enact into law the Uniform State Acts endorsed by the
South Carolina Commissioners on Uniform Legislation.

5. FINANCES

The finances of the State are in good shape. The General Fund surplus as of
July 1, 1947, stood at $1,728,000. Estimates of revenues for the current year
indicate another surplus of income over appropriations of very close to $2,000,000,
unless reduced by any deficiency appropriations which may be made at this session.

I condemn deficiency appropriations and feel that they should be approved only
in extreme emergencies and after sanction in advance by the Budget Commission.

I strongly disapprove the practice of a State agency spending more than its appro-
priation, and I am glad to say that the entire Budget Commission is in agreement
with this view. Appropriations made by the General Assembly are intended to be
final, and this should be understood clearly by all State agencies. The Budget
Commission is determined to exercise fully the powers conferred upon it by the General Assembly to prevent over-spending by any State agency.

For the fiscal year 1948-49, revenues are estimated at $70,800,000. The Budget Commission has proposed appropriations totalling $69,983,000 for the operation of the State Government, leaving a revenue margin of a little more than $800,000. The appropriations recommended are regarded as maximum, and I feel that it would be unwise for the General Assembly to venture beyond the amounts so recommended. We must continue to handle the finances of the State in a prudent and business-like manner, and a sound fiscal policy should be our constant goal.

6. EXECUTIVE CLEMENCY

Respect for law in South Carolina has greatly increased during the past year. "Leaves of absence" are a thing of history, and I have cancelled all outstanding "leaves of absence" granted in the past, which included some life termers. I have pardoned no one during my administration.

We have strengthened our probation and parole system. Prisoners paroled by former Governors and not placed under the Probation, Parole and Pardon Board have been placed under this Board for supervision. Law violators who justify another chance and an opportunity to prove that they can become useful citizens are being paroled by and under the jurisdiction of the Probation, Parole and Pardon Board. Under this procedure all prisoners are treated on a fair and equal basis, and the rights of society are respected.

Those who violate the law know that as long as I am Governor they cannot hope to gain their freedom in any manner except through the orderly procedure prescribed by the laws of the State. We have put an end to the vicious practices which weakened public respect for law and undermined the judicial processes of our courts.

7. THE ECONOMIC PICTURE

Our generation in South Carolina is facing with determination the vital problem of business and industrial development as the means of raising the economic level of our people. We shall be a great State only to the extent that we succeed in this endeavor, and provide economic opportunities for our young men and young women as they actively enter the life of our State.

In our struggle to develop South Carolina, we have every right to be gratified and encouraged by the 1947 decision of the Supreme Court of the United States sustaining the ruling of the Interstate Commerce Commission requiring the railroads to equalize freight rates throughout the nation.

When the full effect of the decision has been attained, we shall at long last enjoy
equality of industrial opportunity with every other section of the country. No longer will we suffer from the discriminatory freight rate structure, with its sectional differentials, which has tended to keep us in virtually a colonial status—producing raw materials but unable to get most manufactured products to market on a competitive basis with the sections enjoying these rate differentials.

Since we have gotten little for our raw materials, and have had to pay high prices for manufactured goods, we have suffered from an adverse trade balance, and have had little money to provide for our people, both white and colored, the high standards of health, education and welfare which some sections enjoy. As a result of the equalization of freight rates, we shall be better able to solve our economic problems in the years to come and shall then resume our rightful place in the economy of the nation.

The railroads made a counter-move by attempting to obtain an increase in our low commodity rates before rate equalization became general all over the country. The Freight Rate Committee of the Southern Governors’ Conference, of which I am Chairman, opposed this. I am glad to report that our fight was successful, and these rates will remain as they are until general rate equalization has been brought about.

Local transportation in South Carolina has received special attention. Our farm-to-market road program was greatly accelerated during 1947. Approximately $12,000,000 was spent on secondary roads, and 800 miles were paved and placed under contract for paving. This year our plans call for spending approximately $15,000,000 on farm-to-market roads, including the paving of an additional 1,000 miles.

Progress has been made in our State-wide program to develop our seaports as valuable economic instruments. Seaports capable of handling ocean commerce will give our business and industry the means of competing in national and world markets. We must continue the development of these natural resources of the State as the means of serving existing businesses and industries and attracting new ones.

Our industrial development activities are meeting with success which offers encouragement for the future. During 1947, new plants valued at $8,896,000 started operations in South Carolina. Plants now under construction and scheduled to begin operating in 1948 are valued at $145,000,000. From mid-1946 through 1948, some 950 plants scheduled expansion and construction involving an estimated total
South Carolina can review with pride its accomplishments in production in the factory and on the farm. For this, both management and labor deserve our commendation and thanks. They are producing at new high levels, and they lost less production from strikes, lockouts, and work stoppages last year than in any similar period since our industrial development began. Wages and operating incomes have both increased.

To insure continued progress in the economic life of our State, we must keep up to date the inventory of our economic assets and resources, and utilize them to the fullest. Especially must we see to it that our products are processed and finished at home, and sent to market from South Carolina. Thus we shall gain the maximum benefit from our expanding economy.

8. CONCLUSION

As the General Assembly enters upon another session, I pledge again my sincere desire to cooperate with you in every way possible in promoting the welfare of our commonwealth.

In seeking to establish better government in South Carolina, we are dealing not only with the future of this generation but with the welfare of generations yet unborn. This is a solemn responsibility. Let us so focus our activities at this session that, in the years to come, all of us can look back with satisfaction to what we now accomplish for a better South Carolina.

With the Legislative and the Executive branches of government working together in harmony, we can and will give South Carolina the sound, progressive, and efficient government which our people have every right to expect and enjoy.

As we go forward with our duties let us keep in our minds the words of Henry Clay:

"Government is a trust, and the officers of the government are trustees; and both the trust and trustees are created for the benefit of the people."
ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE 1947 SESSION

1. The school legislation passed was the most progressive and constructive in the history of the State. This included the establishment by permanent law of a State-supported 9 months school term and the best salary schedule for teachers ever provided. The survey of the public schools of the State, which was authorized, is now being made with funds provided by the State, and funds secured from the General Education Board. The State Department of Education was reorganized in order to fix responsibility more definitely, to promote efficiency, and to provide more and better service to education. The textbook law was amended to give the State Board of Education power to deal with the problem created by war-time shortage of textbooks and to eliminate the necessity of making wholesale changes in the list of adopted books. The Division of School House Planning was re-established in the Department of Education. A State system of Area Trade Schools was created, and I am happy to report that two are now in operation. The State now pays the salaries of County Superintendents of Education. The education of the children of deceased or disabled veterans of World War II was provided for. Appropriations were augmented for various educational services, including vocational education, Negro education, adult education, and the transportation of school pupils. More adequate financial support was furnished for our State institutions of higher learning. No General Assembly has ever done more for education in South Carolina.

2. The allotment of a major part of the State's surplus to a capital improvement and construction program, at our institutions of higher learning and other State institutions, constituted a prudent investment of these funds, which otherwise may have been
Among other things, this enabled us to make provision for the construction of the sorely needed teaching hospital at the State's Medical College as the keystone of our State-wide health program.

3. Standards for hospitals were established and provisions made for their inspection, and more adequate hospital facilities for the general public were planned or provided for, including the new half-million dollar cancer clinic.

4. In the field of public welfare, legislation was enacted under which a comprehensive and adequate assistance program may be developed, and support was increased for the aged, dependent children, and physically and mentally handicapped people.

5. Legislation was enacted to discourage drunken driving on our highways, and the State Identification Bureau was transferred from the State Highway Department to the Governor's office, preliminary to the setting up of a State Bureau of Investigation.

6. The enactment of the graduated liquor surtax resulted in eliminating some of the evils attendant upon the handling of liquor in the State, as well as putting into effect a better method of taxation in this field. I have recommended in my message that this tax be continued for the ensuing fiscal year.

7. Household goods and furniture used in the owners' homes were exempted from taxation, and a committee was appointed to study the assessment of property for purposes of taxation.

8. A temporary agency was created to handle war surplus property acquisition for the State, and for Counties, Cities, districts, and charitable and non-profit organizations, and has been able to save them over $4,000,000 in the acquisition of such property.

9. The State Appropriation Act included all appropriations, whether current or continuing, incident to the operation of the State Government, so that, for the first time, our people were
informed in one document exactly how their money is being spent. We should want our handling of the public funds to be crystal clear to everyone, and no more practical start toward this goal could have been made.

10. A committee was appointed to solicit Federal support in promoting export and sale of South Carolina flue-cured tobacco. It was gratifying to us to see millions of pounds of this tobacco finding its way to the export markets of the world through our own seaport of Charleston, which, together with the ports of Beaufort and Georgetown, are being developed by the State, as a part of our program to strengthen the State's economic structure.

11. A resolution was passed memorializing the Congress of the United States to complete the construction by the Army Engineers of the Clark's Hill power, navigation, flood control and recreation project on the Savannah River. The contract for the dam has already been let, and I feel confident, because of the additional appropriation made by the Congress last year, that this huge natural resource of our section of the country will be developed in due course, and that the power which will be generated there will advance materially the raising of the economic level of life of large sections of our State which have remained too long inadequately developed.
1. Revision and clarification of our State Constitution so as to make that instrument meet the needs of our great State in the year 1948 and the future. I again suggest that, as a preliminary to constitutional revision, we should set up a committee of lawyers and laymen well versed in government and the history of our State to recommend to the General Assembly for consideration, the amendments needed to bring our organic law up to date and make it a growing instrument of service to the people.

2. Amendment of the Constitution to remove the power of clemency from the Governor except in capital cases. The people wish to have the privilege of voting on such an amendment, and its adoption will not end clemency entirely, but will enable the General Assembly, as the representatives of the public, to safeguard its exercise and protect the sanctity of the judgments of the courts and the verdicts of juries. Continued respect for law and order to a large extent depends upon your action on this measure.

3. Establishment of a merit personnel system for the State Government so as to make public service depend on honesty, ability, energy, courtesy and courage—rather than political influence and geographical residence.


5. A proper system of County Government. This omission in our Constitution must be corrected in order to end the ridiculous existing condition under which the City of Columbia is in reality the County Seat of every County in the State, because the local affairs of each County are actually handled by the General Assembly there. This may be done either by a municipal form of local government in each County or by a constitutional amendment empowering County Delegations to deal with local matters in the individual County Seats.

6. Coordination of the total program of education at our colleges. This will help to eliminate wasteful duplication and overlapping of services and effect a more unified program of higher education.
7. Reorganization of the State Board of Health in such manner as to give adequate representation to the general public on this important State agency.

8. Local option for counties and municipalities on the liquor question.


10. Creation of an Alcoholic Beverage Control Board to better regulate the liquor business, and relieve the Tax Commission of this onerous burden so that it can concern itself solely with the collection of the State's revenues.

11. A veterans' bonus on a cash basis or payable in the form of a tax credit, and a 5-year exemption from business license taxes.

12. The establishment of a State Bureau of Investigation to replace the present State Constabulary.

13. A comprehensive program for reforestation, to preserve the priceless asset which we have in our timber resources.

14. Adequate protection for our fish and game.

15. Inspection of school buses, examination of bus drivers and regulation of the type of vehicle to be used for buses in which school children are transported.

16. Fire safety measures to prevent hotel disasters.

17. A maximum hour and minimum wage scale for employees of certain industrial plants.

18. Provision for textile and other plants to furnish equipment that will maintain temperature and humidity conducive to the health of employees.

19. An "Occupational Disease" law as an amendment to the Workmen's Compensation Law.

20. Regulation of the hours of labor of women in mercantile and service establishments.


22. Regulation of the employment of children.

23. Regulation of child placing.
24. Modernization and strengthening of child adoption laws.
25. Clarification of jurisdiction of the several courts as to children.
26. Amendment of the Constitution to remove the poll tax as a voting prerequisite.
27. A secret type or Australian ballot in general elections.
28. Legalization of the use of voting machines in general elections.
29. A system of permanent registration.
30. Carefully prepared legislation prescribing the essentials of capacity to vote, and restricting the right to vote to those possessing such qualifications.
31. Reorganization of the Aeronautics Commission, to give each judicial circuit representation, so that the expanding interests and needs of every section will receive due protection and consideration.