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Text of Remarks of Governor J. Strom Thurmond at 17th Anniversary of WSPA and Dedication of WSPA-FM

Strom Thurmond

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I come to Spartanburg tonight delighted to perform three things, all of which to me are extremely important.

Naturally I like to be among friends and I feel that here in Spartanburg I am with the type of people who believe, with me, that South Carolina can be improved through the cooperation of all classes of people who are eager to work for the benefit of our state. The support that I have received from Spartanburg and the whole-hearted cooperation that I am continuing to get from your representatives emphasize that we can advance if our leadership is unselfish and is determined to work for the improvement of our people and our institutions.

Next, I want to congratulate Spartanburg on re-capturing James F. Byrnes. I know that you love him and that you realize that he is a man of great ability and of tremendous accomplishments. But I sometimes wonder whether you and the other people of South Carolina understand just how great Mr. Byrnes' accomplishments have been. He has served this state and this country in more important ways than any other man in the history of the United States. He has reached these heights by force of his ability, his integrity, and by his persistence to see a job through to its completion.

I am sure that this man, whose life has not been without its disappointments but who carried on without complaining in the face of personal discouragement, would still be in public service if he had not been forced by his physician to slow down and become less active than his duties as Secretary of State would permit. It is fitting that he has returned to Spartanburg to enjoy the rest that is rightfully his. I hope that he will stay here in South Carolina with us unless the demands of his country become so pressing that he is forced to forgo his present plans.
in order to serve the world again as it strives for peace.

To Mr. Byrnes all of us owe a great debt. You can do your share of paying that debt by seeing that his life in Spartanburg is full of pleasantries and enjoyable living among friends. Our sympathy goes out to him now in his bereavement and we regret that he is not with us tonight.

My third mission here is to congratulate the ownership, the management and personnel of radio station WSPA on occasion of its 17th anniversary and on the occasion of its starting Frequency Modulation operation with 3,000 watts power. Both events are important.

In the 17 years since the operation of Station WSPA began in 1929, many events of tremendous importance have taken place in South Carolina. Our people have become better informed on problems of the day and on the importance of active citizenship. I am sure that the services rendered by WSPA and the other active and beneficial stations of this state have done much to help lift our citizenship to higher levels. The public service features of radio broadcasting are obligations that most stations meet willingly and I know that all of you will agree that WSPA in Spartanburg has been a leader in acceptance of these responsibilities. If South Carolina is to grow—and it must grow in prosperity and in enlightened people in order to survive—our media for the dissemination of public information must continue to serve the people of our state. Not for a day can they sit idly by and allow public opinion to suffer because that public is not properly informed.

It is really a trust and I know that our leaders in formulating public opinion will recognize that fact and will continue to serve beneficially the people of South Carolina.

I believe our radio stations have been placed in too much of a straitjacket with reference to taking a stand on public questions which affect the people they serve. Certainly
radio stations must be fair and impartial in presenting controversial questions. But I do feel that radio stations could and should have programs for the social and economic betterment for the communities and sections they serve. Radio stations should be free to editorialize in promoting these programs designed to improve community life and promote good government.

WSPA and the new station we are dedicating tonight, WSPA-FM, serve a great section of the Carolinas.

Speaking here in the heart of the Piedmont, I want to reiterate what I have said before. The industrial growth of this section was no accident. It came about because you possess people of energy, of conviction, and of practical dreams. It came about because your people are good workers and good managers.

What impresses me more and more as I travel over this section is the fine balance here between industry and agriculture and within industry and agriculture. I want to commend the farmers of this area who have done so much in getting your agriculture away from a one-crop system. They have truly diversified. The fact that Spartanburg County last year shipped more fresh peaches than any other county in the world speaks for the vision and efficiency of your peach growers. With Spartanburg County setting the pace, South Carolina has become the dominating peach growing state. I am glad the farmers here are taking care of the land because without its continued and improved fertility no agricultural economy will remain sound.

Already you have a well balanced agriculture, but there is still room for greater diversification. Much of the milk people of Spartanburg drink today was shipped in here from Tennessee and other states. Produce more milk, raise more livestock, develop your pastures, keep your peach and cotton lands fertile by proper rotation and planting of legumes, and the agriculture of the piedmont will continue to grow and prosper.

Your industries also are diversified. You have timber treating, textile machinery, and various plants other than your
wonderful textile mills. There is room for more diversification. The garment industries are on the move. You need more of these small industries and I urge you to go out after them.

Some of you will recall that I came to Spartanburg before I was sworn in as Governor and went to Washington with a committee to keep Camp Croft. I regret we were unsuccessful. But this city and this section must not permit this great plant to be junked. The lands can be utilized for farm purposes and the cantonment area will furnish ideal sites for new industries. Also, some of the barracks should be converted for veterans housing.

I hope the Spartanburg County Foundation will acquire Camp Croft. If I can help this splendid organization in this undertaking, I want to do it. You cannot afford to permit this camp with all of its utilities and improvements to be junked and wasted away as was old Camp Wadsworth. The forward looking people of Spartanburg, I am confident, will see to it that some arrangement is made to acquire Camp Croft for Spartanburg.

I could go on paying tribute to this fine section, but I will be talking here again soon at the annual dinner of the Chamber of Commerce and I will have more to say.

I want to talk some more about radio, because this is a subject that fascinates me. We are tonight marking a new venture in radio broadcasting in South Carolina. WSPA was the first standard broadcasting station in South Carolina and it is indeed fitting that this company should be the first to provide Frequency Modulation broadcasting in our State. The service that will come from the FM broadcasts will be far more enjoyable than that presented by our present system of broadcasting.

I am told that Frequency Modulation soon will be the primary means of radio presentations and that the public will be so pleased with the results that they will quickly forget the previous standards, even though they may have seemed high several years previously. Spartanburg, which has been first in so many important developments in South Carolina, should receive wide acclaim for the service that will come from the operation of
WSPA's new station.

Radio can mean much of value and entertainment to the people of this state. We still are a rural state and by means of the radio—and especially by means of Frequency Modulation—people away from centers of population can be reached and kept informed with good radio service both day and night.

Personally, I have had much experience with radio and I have come to the conclusion that it is a tremendous force for good. The management of WSPA has demonstrated it realizes how important radio is for the good of the people it serves, and over WSPA-FM I am confident it will present entertaining, educational and religious programs to the people of the Piedmont area.

And so my friends, I admonish you to listen to the programs of this new station and I call upon the station itself to be careful in its presentations so that the greatest possible number of people will be benefited by the programs and the entertainment that are offered. Station WSPA-FM Can—and I am sure will—help tremendously in carrying out my ideas for the betterment of South Carolina. Now, on this inaugural program, it takes upon itself a trust—a public trust. I am sure that it will carry out that trust faithfully and eagerly.

In my inaugural address last month, I made the specific recommendation that radio be widely used in our educational program. I said—and here I quote—"We should consider the prompt establishment of a Frequency Modulation educational radio station, as has been planned in 21 other states. Later, additional stations can be added to form a statewide network of such stations. There is strong sentiment favoring a suitable memorial to World War II veterans. Could a more fitting memorial to World War II veterans be established than a statewide system of radio for educational purposes?"

I repeat that recommendation now. All of you have seen how radio not only helps your enjoyment of living but brings to you many benefits. The new system of Frequency Modulation, with its static-free reception and with its fidelity of tone, will bring to
its listeners improved quality and heightened pleasure. The natural sounds that will come from your FM sets will mean that music, for example can be presented properly to many additional thousands. The fidelity of reception will mean a fuller understanding of music, of diction, of literature and of many of the other fine things of life.

I hope that the schools of Spartanburg's area will quickly secure sets suitable to FM reception. I know that pupils who receive these additional benefits and who share in this adjunct to normal education will be better citizens thereby.

Spartanburg has the first FM station in South Carolina. I know that it will not be the last. As a matter of fact, I understand that Anderson, Greenville and other cities have stations now in the process of construction and I hope that other communities will follow because we will need numerous FM stations to cover adequately all of South Carolina. The idea that has been started in Spartanburg should spread. All of our educational institutions should take advantage of the quality presentations that are to come from their FM sets. And perhaps soon we will have sufficient sets and sufficient stations in South Carolina to serve all of our people.

Once again I want to congratulate the management of WSPA for the progressive manner in which they are increasing their service to the people of the Piedmont section and for the example of leadership that has been set for all of South Carolina. I would also like personally to congratulate my friend, Walter Brown, who is progressive and always in the forefront in matters pertaining to the welfare of his State and Nation.

And now ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure and privilege to throw the switch which puts WSPA-FM on the air with 3,000 watts power and as Governor of South Carolina dedicate this new radio outlet in Spartanburg to the social, economic, educational betterment of this great section of the Carolinas.