5-28-1947

Address of J. Strom Thurmond, Governor of South Carolina on the Opening of the Knox Housing Project

Strom Thurmond

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Recommended Citation
Thurmond, Strom, 'Address of J. Strom Thurmond, Governor of South Carolina on the Opening of the Knox Housing Project' (1947). Strom Thurmond Collection, Mss100. 200. https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/strom/200

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It is indeed a pleasure for me to participate in this ceremony marking the launching of the Knox Corporation in the factory-built housing field.

Our interest in the development of this Southern industry is more than passing. Living just across the river in Edgefield, I naturally have a keen interest in seeing this undertaking succeed as I know it will. You here in Georgia are familiar with the industrial strides which have been made by the Knox boys. We in South Carolina are proud of their attainment. I might mention here that one of these boys, Pete Knox, came over our way and married a fine South Carolina girl, Miss Aiken, of Florence.

In all seriousness we must admit that this nation faces a serious housing shortage. Here in the South this situation is more acute perhaps than in other sections of the country, especially on our farms.

To build a plant where houses are produced on an assembly line like automobiles and other forms of mass production is a great accomplishment. Mass production in housing will mean we will have better housing at a cheaper price. When automobiles first came out, only the rich could afford to own one. But with mass production, automobiles are no longer a luxury for the rich. If by producing housing on a mass production low cost basis we can meet the demands of the one-third of our country which is still ill housed, this will be the greatest achievement since the automobile.

I know that you people here in Georgia are happy that one of the first plants to turn out housing on a mass production basis is located near Augusta, at Thomson. We in South Carolina expect to feel the good effect of this progressive development because when a plant here turns out 25 houses a day we over in South Carolina are going to get some of these houses. And, like yourselves, we need them badly.
What this venture proves to me above everything else is that the South in its young men has the brains and the courage to match wits and business ability with the industrial leaders of the East. Too long has the South educated its young men only to have them go off to other sections and develop great enterprises.

These Knox boys decided to stay at home and develop their own industries and provide jobs for their own people and make their own state and section a better place in which to live. I commend them for it and cite them as an example to other young men who have felt that the South does not offer the future in business and industrial development as other sections.

The South is the nation's economic opportunity number one. We have won our fight for a fair deal in freight rates. That was the final barrier we had to overcome. What we are witnessing here today in my opinion marks the beginning of a new era in the South. Good housing is the foundation for good living. We are passing out of the era of the back house. Our people, both white and colored, are entitled to the comforts of a good house, including electricity and running water.

By producing houses on a mass production basis, I sincerely hope the Knox Corporation will blaze the trail for reducing housing costs and making it possible for those of all income groups to live in comfort and under sanitary conditions. Therefore, to you, Pete Knox, and all your associates, I wish for you every success.