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Civil Defense

Strom Thurmond

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ADDRESS

CIVIL DEFENSE

If any Americans have supposed that two World Wars would suffice for one half century, they must surely know by now the danger of their delusions. If anyone had supposed that the term "civil defense" might be conveniently forgotten, he had better jog his memory now.

Today new concepts of civil defense are being born under threat of war. Science has so greatly increased the range of weapons that every civilian is a potential victim. Hence, every civilian has a responsibility to himself and his family to learn the elementary facts about civil defense, and every State Government has the responsibility of assisting and encouraging its citizens toward achieving the utmost in civilian protective measures.

There is much to learn. The science of civil defense is still in the experimental stage. We are sifting the failures and the successes of the last war, while we attempt to guess what may come in the next. Civil defense is the organization of the people to minimize the effect of enemy action against life, property and production. It is not preventive. It does not prevent attack, and it does not "shoot back". It is a passive, curative, and
protective function. It may anticipate the attack, minimize the effect, reduce casualties, save lives, render aid and assistance, check the development of secondary damage, restore essential facilities, and in general cushion the blow of an attack.

One great question is naturally paramount in our minds: How will the use of the atomic bomb affect our planning for civilian defense? Naturally, the prospective atomic attack increases the problem. But fortunately the requirements for planning are essentially the same for this bomb as for conventional bombing attacks. One important difference may lie in the psychological effect of the atomic bomb. Hysteria and panic will increase, unless our people can be educated to safety measures which will minimize the after-effects of bombing.

In some quarters the thought has been advanced that there must be a widespread "go underground" movement among our cities as part of a civil defense program. Authorities now say, however, that this will not be necessary on anything like the scale once supposed. The Director of the new Office of Civil Defense Planning, said recently: "Recommendations that cities go underground or that decentralization be mandatory, when coupled with the great costs of carrying out such ideas, are considered, for the most part, to be economically unsound. Experts declare that in plans for future
developments the further concentration of facilities within built
up areas should be avoided...but...this should be looked upon as
part of the adaptation of city growth...rather than as purely a
defense against atom bombs".

The need for advance planning is evident. A study
of civil defense during World War II shows that, at one time or
another, there was a complete breakdown of civil defense measures
in every country. And the greatest cause for each breakdown was
inadequate planning and preparation.

In 1946, as Governor-elect of my State, I was happy
to find myself assigned as a member of The American Legion's
National Committee on Civil Defense. I participated in the writing
of the program which resulted from its studies. Attached to copies
of these remarks are the findings and conclusions of the Legion
Committee, and the basic plan for civil defense as adopted by the
Legion.

created the Office of Civil Defense Planning, with Mr. Russell J.
Hoploy as director. Assisted by experts in this field, and with
the advice of part-time consultants and all the resources of the
Government, the new Office is charged with the establishment of an
integrated national program of civil defense.
This Office is said to be already nearing the end of the first phase of its activity, which is to complete an adequate plan. By next month, it is scheduled to be ready for the legislative program to implement that plan, and following that will come a peacetime organization ready for war.

The States, must begin at once to accept their responsibility in the program, for civil defense is, after all, a State matter. The entire success of the program in any State will depend upon the scale of energy and intelligence employed within that State. In Washington the Office of Civil Defense Planning is merely a coordinating agency designed to assist the States in carrying out the program.

Our first duty, and perhaps our most important, will be in "selling" the idea of civil defense to our people. We must convince them that such a program is essential to their safety. No doubt you realize that this task will not be easy. People as a whole are slow to think of war in times of peace.

The five-year prewar "selling" of air-raid precautions to the British people was a far-sighted move. It prepared them for the quick acceptance of an authoritative program, and it can well be credited with averting complete disaster when the enemy struck.

As Governors, we will be expected to assume the
primary role in publicizing the need for civil defense. We must find means of dramatizing that need, through the newspapers, over the radio, and in the movie theatres. We must encourage educational programs in our schools and civic clubs, so that our people can be awakened to their personal duties and responsibilities in civil defense.

A second serious duty for Governors will be in the implementation of the program by legislation. Uniform State laws which may be integrated into a wartime national plan should be our consideration here and at future meetings. We must see to it that State legislation for civil defense shall be constructed carefully under our own guidance and protection. Upon proper coordination with the Federal Office of Civil Defense Planning, we, ourselves, should initiate and consummate that legislation. It should not be merely handed to us, by the Federal Government, for Civil Defense is a civilian and a State function, not a military one. We must see that such legislation contains adequate safeguards for State sovereignty and for return to local autonomy when war ends.

It is in the statutory phase of civil defense planning that the States enter the picture, and from that point forward the States cannot relinquish responsibility for its success. Normal State governmental machinery must be augmented by a State Civil Defense Council and a Director of Civil Defense, with emergency
powers to coordinate and direct police, fire, and other protective services. The Council must be authorized to supervise and prescribe the civil defense organization in counties and cities. Some States probably will organize State or Home Guards to strengthen law and order when National Guard units are withdrawn.

The individual role of each State becomes only too clear when it is realized that we must be prepared to stand alone in the event of attack. The expectation is that the enemy may strike in many areas simultaneously. Thus, while our neighbor suffers, we must stand ready to receive the attack at the same time.

Requirements of civil defense will make a heavy demand on manpower in time of war. The personnel of State and city police and fire departments are vital, and their strength must be greatly augmented to meet an emergency. Personnel, both men and women, must be used to a maximum degree. For the present, a peacetime skeleton force, that can be quickly brought to full strength, may serve until the enemy strikes.

But we must have that skeleton force, and we must have it soon.

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