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States' Rights, 1948 October 4

Strom Thurmond

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MY FELLOW AMERICANS:

They tell me that North Carolina is called "the Tar Heel State" because of your vast production of rosin, turpentine, and tar in the coastal plains. That nickname always reminds me of the great natural wealth of North Carolina. But my admiration for your state, like the admiration of all your good neighbors in South Carolina, comes principally from a feeling of close kinship to your people.

Today I traveled through a large part of your Commonwealth. It was my privilege to talk with fellow Americans in Charlotte, Gastonia, Hickory, and Hendersonville, as we traveled along the way to the picturesque and hospitable city of Asheville.

That trip convinced me of a fact which I had long thought to be true. There are many thousands of North Carolinians who agree that the foremost problem in America today is the protection of our Constitutional rights and the sovereignty of our states.

Back in 1787 the people were faced with a similar problem. At the Constitutional convention in Philadelphia that year, a great part of the discussion centered around the sovereign rights of the states assembled. After that meeting, the people of North Carolina held their own convention at Hillsboro. By a vote of 184 to 84, they refused to ratify the new Constitution because it did not contain a Bill of Rights, and because it provided for such a strong central government that your North Carolina forebears were afraid that the individual state governments would be sacrificed.

They insisted that the Constitution be amended so as to guarantee the rights of the states, and two years later, North Carolina ratified the Constitution after the Bill of Rights had
been added.

Today, we of the States' Rights Democrats are making the same kind of fight. We believe that there are forces in this nation today which would build a strong centralized government that would ultimately destroy state lines and take local self-government away from the people. We have seen those forces gain a temporary victory by the adoption, in the platforms of three Presidential candidates, of the most vicious assault upon Constitutional government in American history. That is why I am in North Carolina tonight.

I am here because I believe the people of the State of North Carolina know their Constitutional rights, and that they are ready to fight for them!

I believe that when the history of our times is written, the historians will say that out of the four candidates for President in 1948, three stood for the strong central government—or totalitarian state—and that only one stood for the kind of government that has made the United States the greatest nation on earth.

It is an amazing fact—three candidates for President today—Harry Truman, Tom Dewey, and Henry Wallace—have publicly advocated platforms containing promises which, if they are carried out, would take away our basic rights of self-government, and centralize power in Washington.

The States' Rights Democrats, who place love for country above the desire for political power, are patriotic enough to recognize that fact, and to make a fight to preserve the basic liberties of our people.

Our opponents, who are so well skilled in the art of deception, have thrown the weight of their propaganda against us. They are spreading abroad the lie that we are opposed to human rights and the progress of all races. They are publicizing the falsehood that our campaign is a narrow sectional fight.
It has always been through this kind of deception that the totalitarian state has won its victories throughout the world. The programs of Hitler, of Stalin, of Mussolini, and of all tyrants and dictators have always been disguised with false claims. Men of good will who have nothing but love in their hearts for humanity are often deceived by clever doctrines that make use of the catch-phrases of human welfare.

The so-called "Civil Rights" program of Truman, Dewey, and Wallace is full of the same kind of deception that prostrated Europe, and that is spreading out of Russia today into every corner of the world. These three candidates—either out of ignorance or out of malicious intent—have become the political agents of a kind of doctrine which would violate the Constitutional basis of our democracy and convert America into a total state.

All good Americans favor human rights. But thoughtful Americans know that the United States Constitution is the only real guarantee of human rights. Without the Constitutional precepts of local self-government and home rule, human rights will be subject to the destructive assault of the dictators.

The unconstitutional program of the three Philadelphia conventions was adopted in an effort to bid for the votes of small but powerful minority groups in doubtful states. Leaders of those minorities demanded and got the Civil Rights doctrine. Those leaders have told their ignorant followers that they would gain their human rights because of it.

To anyone who has studied the growth of Hitlerism and Stalinism, these claims are like high treason. Recent history has made clear that dictators rise to power by crushing the minorities.

Let me say now to the people of those minority groups, that if the United States Constitution is not preserved to the letter, the minorities of this country will be the first to suffer.

It is not an accident that the people of the United States have escaped tyranny thus far. The men who wrote our Con-
stitution knew the danger of tyranny. They knew that a strong central government in a country so vast as ours would inevitably result in tyranny. When they wrote the Constitution, they held the sources of power close to the people. This they did by reserving most of the rights of government to the states and to the cities and counties.

The misnamed Civil Rights proposals endorsed by Truman, Dewey, and Wallace would overturn all constitutional precedents to date on the division of sovereignty between the states and the Federal Government. They would distort or ignore plain and positive provisions of the Constitution prohibiting such legislation.

The States'Rights Democrats do not claim that the enactment of those proposals would immediately convert America into a police state. But we do maintain that they would open the doors to dictatorship so wide that no protection would remain against the rise of a dictator.

We maintain, in addition, that the Civil Rights proposals would make radical changes in the American way of life, which can only lead to violence, lawlessness, and widespread racial discord. We maintain that such a program would be a stunning blow to a Southland which has now virtually attained its goal of economic equality with the rest of the nation.

Let us examine briefly the effect these proposals would have upon our American way of life.

The Anti-Poll Tax Bill would lead to federal control of elections, by usurping the right of a state to establish voting qualifications.

The Anti-Lynching Bill would usurp the functions of the state legislatures and of the state courts in dealing with crimes occurring within the states.

The Anti-Segregation proposals would interfere with state and local laws dealing with the separation of the two races.
The F.E.P.C. bill, the most vicious of the lot, would assume the right to regulate private businesses and private employment within the states.

And finally, the Civil Rights recommendations would create a national police force that would invade the functions of state, county, city and town policemen, and of duly elected sheriffs.

It is hard to believe that such a vile, Communistic program could ever be enacted in America. But you have seen how very close the Congress has come to passing it. And you have seen the minority factions force Truman, Dewey, and Wallace to promise that it will be enacted.

I defy those factions. I am dedicated to the belief that the American people are going to stop that evil program, and stop it in this election!

My friends, the entire world is alarmed today over the prospect that we may be plunged into another war. Our alarm is based on the greedy bid for power being made by a totalitarian state—Soviet Russia.

We are alarmed because the boss of that state, Joseph Stalin, has shown every indication that he hopes to spread his control into every corner of the world until his iron grip is fastened on people everywhere.

And yet Mr. Truman, Mr. Dewey, and Mr. Wallace have all three endorsed a piece of legislation which is almost exactly like a law written by Stalin in 1920—an employment law which served him as a stepping stone to power.

What are the implications of their Fair Employment Practices Act—the F.E.P.C.? It purports to guarantee fair treatment in employment. Actually, it takes away the right of a business man to use his own judgment in employing the kind of people he needs. And it takes away the right of a working man to choose a job in which he may associate with the people
of his choice.

To those who scoff at such statements—to those who do not believe the F.E.P.C. would take away such rights—it let me point out that even destroys the right of trial by jury, to those who do not comply. Under it, the FEPC would act as prosecutor, judge, and jury. It would receive complaints, investigate complaints, assist those who complain, seize a business man's records to compile evidence, and pass judgment on the merits of its own case. Those who disobey that judgment would be fined or clapped in jail.

Now, a word to those who work in textile mills and industrial plants in the South. The goods you make move in interstate commerce. Under the FEPC, the Federal Police will move in and require your employers to abandon all forms of segregation in your mills, replacing white workers with colored workers to carry out its racial quota system. The FEPC would force textile employers to put the races side by side in our plants, using the same rest rooms, the same eating places, and the same recreational facilities.

And a word to those who have become alarmed over the gains made by Communist spies in our government. Did you know, that the FEPC law could be used by the Communists to put their agents into every tool and die room, every munitions plant, and every atomic laboratory in America? That is why the Communist elements of this country are so eager to endorse this program.

This proposal would delight every Communist in this country. And yet we have the word of President Truman, that he is already training a federal police force in the Justice Department, to enforce it when it becomes the law.

But, ladies and gentlemen, the States' Rights Democrats are telling the world, that this proposal is a foreign doctrine, and that it will not work in a free America!
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But, ladies and gentlemen, the States' Rights Democrats are telling the world, that this proposal is a foreign doctrine, and that it will not work in a free America!
Whatever the rest of the nation may do, the Southern States will stand firm against the un-American platforms of the Philadelphia conventions. Because we are united against them, the Philadelphia candidates are holding us up to scorn.

Some of them are now invading the South with their vicious attacks upon the traditions of our people. One of them has recently spoken in this very city.

But it is not a compliment to the political sagacity of our opponents that they are willing to send Senator Barkley to lecture us on our shortcomings. His long record of voting against the wishes of our Southern Senators makes it astounding that Barkley has threatened our people with political disaster if they do not vote for him.

This Senator not only voted for the FEPC, but he favored the cloture, which would have destroyed the only weapon our Senators had of preventing the passage of these force bills.

Back in 1942, when the Southern Senators “played hookey” to keep from considering the poll-tax bill, Barkley used his power as Democratic Majority Leader to bring them in. He sent the Sergeant-At-Arms of the Senate out to place seven of our Southern Senators under “arrest” and forced them to consider the measure.

It is amazing to behold such a man invading North Carolina to lecture you because you would not support Al Smith in 1928, and to threaten you with political reprisals if you do not support President Truman.

Another recent visitor to North Carolina, Henry Wallace, came here to make himself look like a hero. His conduct was not exactly consistent with the many visits he paid you as Secretary of Agriculture and as Vice President. Then he was willing to eat in your best restaurants and stay in your best hotels. I ask you to recall a single occasion in those days when Henry Wallace opened his mouth to protest your segregation.

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Of course not. It was only after he began competing with Truman and Dewey for the minority vote that he took a sudden notion to make himself a hero by defying our laws. This only goes to show to what extent some people will go to secure a small bloc of votes in certain big-city states.

But I say to them, that the people of the South are not going to violate their traditions and change all their customs, in order to help any man get elected.

While Wallace was in the South, he unfortunately became the target for a few well-aimed articles of food. We cannot condone that kind of political activity. But did you know, that while eggs and tomatoes were being thrown at Wallace in this state, stones were being thrown at one of his Progressive Party speakers in Illinois.

You didn't read about that in the newspapers and news magazines, did you. North Carolina was condemned on the front pages, but no one heard about the stones being hurled at a Wallace speaker in Illinois.

The right of freedom of speech must be protected. But let me point out that our people also have a right to fair and equal treatment in the press, and that the people of one state should not be singled out and condemned for incidents which may occur anywhere.

As a matter of fact, I sincerely believe the people of Illinois and the people of North Carolina are both determined that the Constitutional right of free speech must be protected.

And I believe, that out of the campaign of the States' Rights Democrats will come a better understanding among all our states, and a greater devotion to the kind of Constitutional government that binds us in a free and democratic union.

It is my pleasure to report that the States' Rights Democratic movement is spreading like wildfire. We have a chance to gain more than 100 electoral votes, and to cause the election
to be thrown into the House of Representatives, where our chances are good.

Failing that, we will certainly purify the great Democratic Party and restore it to its historic devotion to Constitutional self-government. In 1952, there will be no foreign ideologies invading the Democratic platform, and there will be a rededication to the principle of states' rights.

And, without fail, we shall stop the misnamed Civil Rights proposals of Dewey, Truman, and Wallace, and prevent the invasion of local self-government which they would cause.

We invite the people of North Carolina to join with us in this fight to preserve our customs and to maintain our form of government.

You cannot be opposed to Tom Dewey's appeasement of the vicious minorities and still vote for Dewey. You cannot be opposed to Henry Wallace's kind of Communism and still vote for Wallace. You cannot oppose Harry Truman's F.E.P.C. by voting for Truman.

There is only one way in which you can voice your opposition to these vicious foreign proposals, and that is by joining the States' Rights Democrats.

The way is clear. The road lies straight ahead. Let us march upward together toward that day when America shall hold forever secure the blessings of liberty, to ourselves and to our posterity.

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