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States' Rights, 1948 October 19

Strom Thurmond

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ADDRESS BY J. STROM THURMOND, GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA, AND STATES' RIGHTS DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, AT MACON, GEORGIA, OCTOBER 19, 1948

MY FELLOW AMERICANS:

There is a great challenge confronting the people of the United States today, a matter of a choice that will affect our way of life for many generations. We cannot ignore it, because it is concerned with the very principles that form the basis for the government of the State of Georgia, and of all other states of this nation.

Georgia's proudest history from the days of General Oglethorpe has been a story of the rise of the individual man by means of the liberty he has gained through representative government. Your great men -- Gwinnett, Toombes, Stephens, Grady -- all of them -- have been unfailing champions of the principles of local self-government which have made Georgia the Empire State of the South.

Because I know the people of Georgia, I have never for a moment doubted the course they will pursue, and the choice they will make in this election.

Today, millions of Americans have accepted the belief that the people of the United States must assume the moral leadership for a disappointed, disillusioned, war-torn weary world. That is the great problem that faces us, as a
people, in these difficult times. We accept it. We are working

toward its solution, because we believe that the freedoms of
democratic government can bring peace to all men.

We accept our role in international affairs in all

humility, knowing that no man is perfect, and that no way of life

is perfect. But we shall carry out that role with all the strength

of purpose and will of which we are capable, because we are united

in the conviction that the democratic way is the way to peace.

In this effort, we must offer the American system --

our way of life and our form of government -- as a living example

of the strength and effectiveness of a government based on

representative democracy. We must show the world that when men
govern themselves, they may achieve happiness and prosperity.

The American system of local self government, therefore,
is confronted with its greatest test since our forefathers managed
to shake off the yoke of tyranny.

In all seriousness, I say to you now, that if

Americans do not present a united front on the principles of

home rule and government by the people, we shall have failed our
destiny in this terrible hour.

We are able to demonstrate to the world our unity

in many respects. The American people are overwhelmingly in favor
of a firm policy toward the aggressor, at the counsel table.

We are almost unanimous in the belief that we must remain strong in a military way until that aggressor gives up his mad desire for world domination.

We can show the world our unity on many of the domestic problems of the day — a fair policy toward the working man; a policy of full production to make more goods available at lower prices; a sensible and democratic approach to national emergencies such as housing. On many of these questions the Democratic and Republican political platforms show a remarkable unity.

But there is a far greater problem concerned with the American way of life, and on that problem we must seek greater unity. It is a matter so close to the question of our moral leadership in a troubled world that we cannot ignore it for a moment.

The problem of which I speak is that of the continued triumph of the principle of local self-government over the principle of a centralized, all-powerful total state. It is a question of the clash between the American kind of democracy and the Hitler and Stalin theories of totalitarian rule.

My fellow Americans, I would not have you think for a moment that I am discussing high-flown theories that are remote
from your every-day lives. On the contrary, I am talking about
the way you as an individual live and have your being. I am
talking about your freedom to move around this city without
hindrance, to choose your own friends, to choose your own work,
to hold meetings when you please and how you please, to worship
God as you choose. And I am talking about your right to elect
whom you please in a manner of your own choosing.

That is the heart of local self-government. That's
what it means. And that is what the total state would take away
from you.

And yet, my friends, because of an outrageous
piece of political skull-duggery on the part of both the Republican
and the National Democratic party leadership, we are faced with
the most colossal assault upon local self-government ever
thrown at Americans. Both parties have promised to carry out
that assault, and thereby to crush the principles of local self-
government in this country.

They misnamed it "Civil Rights", to hide its
real meaning. They boldly flung it out as a bid for the votes
of a racial minority. And they thought we would accept it because
it had been crammed into the platforms of the major parties.
They thought we would go to the polls and endorse it, thus paving
the way for its enactment.
But those who so vainly believed they could get away with this cheap political treachery did not take into account the temper and mood of the American people. They forgot that the real American votes his convictions, come what may.

Today, the States' Rights Democrats stand as a perpetual reminder to the false political leaders of this nation that American rights and American votes are not for sale!

In recent years, the American people have walked dangerously close to the deep canyon of the socialistic state. Out of our universal desire to achieve greater progress for all our people, we have skidded close to the totalitarian methods of the dictators of Europe.

The building of the centralized state is a process that may be compared to an atomic chain reaction. One step leads to another in a deadly procession.

We have come dangerously near to setting off a chain reaction that would rapidly engulf us in a kind of total state. We have done so out of lofty motives, and those motives we shall not give up, now or ever.

But with all our determination to improve the lot of the common man, we must remember that a man's liberties in this country depend utterly and completely on local self-government. Freedom in the United States depends on freedom within the states,
and that freedom is guaranteed by the rights of states to manage their own internal affairs.

If we destroy the rights of states, we give up the liberties of local self-government, and open our doors to the inroads of the Communists, so that their theories of the total state may gobble us up.

All thinking Americans know these things to be true. That is why Americans are so astounded that Truman, Dewey, and Wallace are all three committed to a program which would launch a wholesale attack upon local self-government.

There can be only one explanation. The political leadership of this nation has fallen into the hands of a bunch of political pygmies, who are so small that they cannot see the vast, towering edifice of Constitutional government. The major parties are controlled by men who lack the vision to lead us, or who lack the courage to defend our rights. Our major parties have been debased and prostrated to the whims of a radical crowd of agitators who claim to control the balance of power in doubtful states.

Yes, it was a dark picture back in Philadelphia in July -- dark for the South and for the nation. But that picture is no longer dark, my friends. A brilliant ray of light has burst forth upon it, to open the eyes of Americans and to gladden their
hearts. Millions of Americans are determined to exercise their Constitutional right of voting their convictions. Millions of our people are going to turn their backs on the false doctrines that have infiltrated our political parties and bought out their leaders.

**We of the States' Rights Democrats are going to repudiate those evil doctrines, cast out the leaders who betrayed us, and set this country back on the straight line of government by the Constitution!**

I have said that the principles of which I speak are closely concerned with the personal freedoms of the individual American in his everyday life. Let me remind you of the ways in which the so-called Civil Rights program would invade your liberties.

Your right to establish voting qualifications in your own state and to regulate elections is endangered by the Anti-Poll Tax Bill, which would violate the Constitutional privilege by which a state controls its own elections.

Your right to control your own sheriffs and police officers, and your right to control and regulate your state courts, are invaded by the Anti-Lynching Bill. This bill would set a precedent for the Congress to pass national laws against
any crime that is now entirely controlled within the states.

The Anti-Segregation proposals are an assault upon your right to establish your own social customs and laws, and to come and go within your community as you please. They would endanger your law-enforcement methods and contribute to lawlessness within your communities. If such a right is given to the federal government to control our social laws, the precedent would enable it to reach down and order us around in our daily lives without regard to our personal desires.

The so-called FEPC is an assault upon the right of a business-man to employ those he deems suitable to his business. It takes away the right of a working man to associate with persons of his choice, on the job and in labor unions. It would assault your right to a trial by jury, since your violations of this law would be passed upon by a Commission, and reviewed on appeal by a court, without a jury trial.

Finally, the enforcement of these laws would be carried out by a national police force, already being trained by Truman. This means you would be hounded by federal police whom you never saw before and who neither know nor care what your problems are.

That is what you would gain if you gave up the right of your state to manage its own internal affairs. You
would lose the only way in the world you have of preventing a
fascist or a communist dictator from taking over your affairs.

I cannot believe that the American people are
willing to exchange the Constitutional rights of their states
for the kind of government that keeps Joseph Stalin in power!

A vote for Mr. Truman, Mr. Dewey, or Mr. Wallace
is a vote for the FEPC -- a piece of legislation which is the
first plank in the Communist platform. All three have endorsed a
bill which is in fact based on a law written by Stalin.

Under the proposed FEPC, the commission would have
the authority to write its own rules and regulations, just as the
New York commission set up by Dewey has. We won't know what
the national rules will be until the commission is named. But
we've had enough experience with this kind of commission to know
where the danger lies.

Let us see what these rules might be by listing
some of those set up by Dewey.

In New York it is unlawful to ask an applicant
for a job what his former name was if he had changed it. You
can't ask him for a birth certificate, or whether he is
nativeborn, or to show his naturalization papers. You can't ask him
whether he is an atheist or not. You can't ask him what his
complexion is, or to send a photograph if he applies by mail.

You can't ask him what kind of a family he comes from.

But, worst of all, you can't even ask him what his military experience is, or to say where he was in World War I.

Thus you might be hiring an alien who shot down your own son overseas, and not even know it.

Is it any wonder the Communists want this law passed? Is it any wonder they have become so bold in our government?

Yes, the Communists have joined the minority machine leaders to promise their help in this election in exchange for the promise of an FEPC. They won the first round, when they got the support of Truman, Dewey, and Wallace.

But the States' Rights Democrats are putting them on notice that we will not vote for and endorse this law to help any man get elected!

There is no way around it -- a vote for Truman, Dewey or Wallace is an indication that you want an FEPC, and an Anti-Poll Tax Bill, and an Anti-Lynching bill, and Anti-Segregation. It is time for good Americans to stand up and be counted. There is no middle ground. Either you are willing to sell your birthrights for the sake of blind party loyalty to...
People of Georgia, this is your fight.

You have been more keenly aware of the dangers which this election holds for Georgia and the people of other States. In election after election you have put into office those candidates who based their campaign on the fundamental principles of State sovereignty and local self government.

There is not now and there has never been any question in my mind as to where the people of old Georgia stand in this fight we are waging for the preservation of constitutional government and our way of life in the South.

I know there are those in Georgia, as in other States, who are going about saying defeat your convictions on these great issues. You should vote for Truman just because he was nominated by a machine-backed Democratic Convention in Philadelphia. And there are other shallow minded people going around saying you should either vote for Dewey or Truman because the two party system must be preserved.

Any such statements as these are an insult to your intelligence.

We know our rights as Democrats and we are not going to be contaminated or intimated by these political hypocrites who ask the people of Georgia to swallow their convictions and vote for candidates who are running on platforms that would lead to the destruction of free America.
The people of Georgia know that Harry Truman sold the South down the river to win the support of big city machine politicians and minority blocks in doubtful States.

The people of Georgia know that Tom Dewey has no sympathy with the problems of the South and has opposed our every effort for economic parity with other parts of the country.

The people of Georgia know that Henry Wallace is doing the bidding of communistic Russia in his campaign and no true American can support him.

My friends of Georgia, the only ticket you can support November 2 and be true to your heritage, be true to generations yet unborn, and above all be true to yourself is the States' Rights Democrats ticket. There is no question but that the States' Rights Democratic Electors are going to carry this State. Your problem in Georgia is made more difficult, however, by reason of the fact that the States' Rights Democratic ticket must win a majority over all other candidates to secure the electoral votes of this State. Therefore, it behooves every true Georgia democrat to begin work immediately to get our voters to the polls on election day. If we do that the States' Rights ticket will receive an overwhelming majority of the votes cast.

And remember this, every vote that goes into your ballot box for Harry Truman, Tom Dewey, or Henry Wallace, is a vote against what is best for the people of Georgia.
Every vote that goes into the ballot box for the Electors pledged to Thurmond and Wright is a vote to preserve those principles of government which are cherished by the people of Georgia.

Take home with you tonight this political truth. Every State which is carried by the Thurmond - Wright ticket will contribute materially to defeating the President's so-called Civil Rights Program in Congress. If for no other reason, the people of Georgia should vote the States' Rights Democratic ticket to back up the Southern members of Congress in their gallant fight against modern day force bills.

Our objective is to throw the Presidential election in the House of Representatives. If Harry Truman can carry enough States in the East, North, and West to prevent Dewey from swinging a clear majority in the Electoral College then the House of Representatives will elect the President. In the House the representatives of Georgia will carry one (1) vote just as the representatives of New York will carry (1) vote. The balance of power will then shift from these minority groups in the big eastern States to the smaller States of the South and the West, and I tell you this will be a wholesome thing in these United States.

But whether we succeed in throwing the election into the House or not the South will win a great victory by standing firm by her convictions and casting our electoral votes for the States' Rights ticket. In so doing the South will demonstrate that we are no longer in the bag and this will gain for us the respect of leaders in both old parties. We will prove that we will not sacrifice our convictions
or our heritage on the block of blind party loyalty.

Once we have done this then we will not have awakened this nation to the dangers which lurk in the so-called Civil Rights Program to Constitutional government, but we will have paved the way for the reorganization and the rededication of the Democratic Party to the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian doctrine of States' Rights. And above all we will have preserved our own self respect. We are Dixiecrats but we are not Dummycrats!

We know that the only way to restore our party to its historical functions as a bulwark of States' Rights and local self government to the end that our people shall never lose their individual liberty to a federal police power operated out of Washington, is to repudiate the alien forces which gained control of our party at the 1948 National Convention in Philadelphia.

And that is just what the people of Georgia and the people of the South are going to do November 2.

The World today is confronted with the most serious decisions in the history of mankind. Communist Russia threatens to destroy the liberties of peoples in all parts of the world. These precious liberties were won by blood being spilled on a thousand battle fields. We cannot and we shall not sit idly by and permit communism to continue to snuff out the liberties of loving people.

The 14 men in the Kremlin now rule nearly 300 million human beings with an iron hand more deadly and more devastating to human liberties than any rulers in all history.
We know that our only protection against these power drunk rulers of the Kremlin plunging the world into another War is our possession of the atom bomb.

If Russia had this powerful weapon it would have already been used for the further enslavement of free people.

We in America and our Democratic Allies are determined that the atom bomb will be used to build up our forces for peace and freedom. This nation is united in its determination to use our great strength toward building a strong United Nations which in the end must assure to mankind its opportunity for peace.

Our great bi-partisan system in international affairs is a way of presenting a united front against the enemies of Democracy and those who threaten the peace.

We must keep that united front safe against the sharp memory of politicians.

But we must also set our own house in order by meeting the challenge of those who would barter away State sovereignty in their drive for a minority block votes and open the door in our country for a federal police State.

We must show the world that the only hope for mankind in this hour of crisis is government by the consent of the governed.

It was here in the South that American Democracy was born and cradled. It is here in the South that American Democracy must be saved. By standing together on November 2 and casting our electoral votes for the only candidate for
President and Vice-President who are running on a platform of States' sovereignty and local self government we will electrify this nation from Maine to Florida and from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

We will so frighten the leaders of both old parties that never again will they dare to barter away our precious heritage of liberty in order to gain support from blocs of minority votes in doubtful States.

We will recapture the heritage of our own Democratic party and turn it back to the hands of leaders whose feet are so firmly planted on the solid rock of Democracy that never again will the party of Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt desert the great principles of State sovereignty and local self government and individual liberties.

My friends of Georgia, never in your lifetime will you be offered such an opportunity to make your vote count so much in preserving your way of life which is the American way of life. The opportunity is yours! Seize it and your children and your children's children will ever bless you for having handed down to them the blessings of liberty and constitutional government.