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States' Rights, 1948 October 27

Strom Thurmond

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ADDRESS OF J. STROM THURMOND, GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA, AND STATES' RIGHTS DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, AT SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA, OCTOBER 27, 1948.

MY FELLOW AMERICANS:

I feel it is a great privilege to be with you here in Shreveport to participate in your ever-growing State Fair. The evidence of economic progress in the State of Louisiana is on every hand, and this charming and colorful occasion is another indication of the harmonious spirit of the people of Louisiana.

This is an especially fine day for me, and a high point in my effort to do my share toward the restoration of Constitutional government in this country. I have looked forward with anticipation to meeting the people of Louisiana, whose action in support of our great cause has been a source of pride to us all.

No state is more blessed than Louisiana with all the fine traditions that go to make up a typically Southern state and a typically American state. And no state is more devoted to the supreme principles of the democratic tradition -- the principles which guarantee our liberties through the Constitution we have sworn to uphold.

It is only natural that Louisiana should take her place today among the states which have had the courage to resist the most wholesale assault upon Constitutional government and upon our individual liberties ever made in America.
If America is to remain free, her people must never submit to any candidate who attempts to barter away our constitution for political gain.

States' Rights Democrats resist this shameful betrayal of our national charter.

By the millions, we are telling these false leaders that they cannot trade away our heritage to satisfy the demands of a minority machine, in order to boost themselves to power!

In recent weeks we have called upon the false leaders of the Democratic Party time and again to make an accounting of their betrayal of the Party's principles and of the people of the South. They have not answered. There is no good answer.

I am not surprised that President Truman, during his Southern trip, failed to explain his action in demanding a program which would utterly change our way of life in the South. In his heart, he knows that he sold Southern Democrats down the river in the most shameful bid for minority bloc votes ever practiced by an American President.

Mr. Truman cannot and he does not attempt to defend his so-called Civil Rights program when he speaks to the South. But when he is speaking in the doubtful states in the North, he appeals for support from the minorities by citing what he has done in this direction.
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Mr. Truman cannot and he does not attempt to defend his so-called Civil Rights program when he speaks to the South. But when he is speaking in the doubtful states in the North, he appeals for support from the minorities by citing what he has done in this direction.
In those states, he is perfectly willing to admit that he wants the Federal Government to break down our segregation laws, usurp the functions of our courts, control our elections, and inflict upon us the un-American and Communist FEPC law.

This time the Democrats of the South will not be fooled by a false cry of party loyalty, and talk of Republican reconstruction.

*Mr. Truman and his big-city bosses, in combination with the minority machines, have cracked the whip over the back of the South for the last time!*

If President Truman and his machine politicians can keep Governor Dewey from securing a majority of the electoral votes in the big states, then the House of Representatives will elect the next President, with the smaller states holding the balance of power. If Truman fails to keep Dewey from securing a majority of electoral votes in the doubtful states, then the South, by voting for the States' Rights Democrats, will have strengthened the hands of the Southern Members of Congress in their fight against the so-called Civil Rights program.

But more important, ladies and gentlemen, we shall have paved the way for a reorganization of the Democratic Party and its rededication to states' rights and local self-government, which are our only guarantees against a Federal police state.
In these days when the doctrines of Soviet Russia are being spread into every land, we must preserve and protect the Constitutional precepts which make it possible for us in America to prevent the rise to power of a dictator. The preservation of these rights are more intimately concerned with the welfare of every man, woman, and child in America than such other serious problems as foreign policy, labor relations, public housing, price control, and the like.

We cannot hope to solve our great domestic problems if we give up the very principles which hold us together as a democratic nation. And we cannot hope to assume the moral leadership of a war-torn world, if we are to surrender the kind of government which has made all the peoples of the world turn to us in this time of world crisis.

We may develop the most reasonable foreign policy ever created. We may enact labor laws which will be the envy of the world. We may build a mansion for every man, and bind up the wounds of war-torn Europe. We may control prices until the profiteer and the black-marketeer are destroyed. But if we lost the rights of our states -- the only real safeguard of human rights -- then we may well ask: "What does it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"
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 -- endorsed by Truman, Dewey, and Wallace, 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 take away the right of the states to pass laws separating the races, which are often necessary to promote racial harmony and law enforcement.

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.

And 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 Mr. Truman, Mr. Dewey, and Mr. Wallace are asking the American people to endorse today.

But the States' Rights Democrats have enough faith in the American people to believe that this false doctrine will be dealt a crippling blow in this election!

A vote for either of these three candidates 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 based on a law written by Stalin.

In this connection, it is rather amazing that Governor Dewey has let it be known that he hopes to win a few votes in the South this year.
It seems a vain hope, when you realize that Dewey fought to
preserve the unfair freight rate system under which the South was
paying as much as 39% more to move freight than it cost to move
it the same distance from the North. Dewey bitterly opposed the efforts
of Southern Governors to secure equal freight rates, so that we
could secure more industry for the South. He said it was to the
best interest of Northern industry to keep the South under unfair
rates. Of course it was.

Governor Dewey's hope for votes in the South seems
rather vain, when you realize that he has endorsed the idea that
the kind of FEPC he already has in New York should be forced upon
the whole nation.

We may easily test the viewpoint of Governor Dewey
by studying the regulations of the New York FEPC -- regulations
which could be set up by the proposed national commission.

In New York it is unlawful to ask an applicant
for a job such questions as: what his former name was, in case he
had used an alias; whether he is a native-born citizen; whether
he is an atheist; what his complexion is, or to send a photograph
when applying by mail; and worst of all, you can't ask him what his
military experience is, or where he was in World War I.
In other words, Governor Dewey's New York law makes it impossible for you to determine whether an applicant for employment was an enemy soldier overseas, who may have shot down our own boys.

There is another phase of the national law proposed by Truman, Dewey, and Wallace, which I should like to bring to the attention of our working people. Under it, a man can be forced to work alongside persons of another race, with whom he does not choose to associate. He cannot quit his job in protest, for that would mean heavy fines or going to jail. And in his labor unions, he would be forced to admit any one who applied, regardless of race, creed, or color.

Thus the FEPC appears in its true aspects -- a method of placing our people under bondage to a federal pattern.

It comes to light, along with the rest of the so-called Civil Rights program, as an attempt by the machine minority to break down segregation in the South, and to destroy the customs which have enabled the Southern people to rise above their economic slavery and to push upward into a position of equality with the rest of the nation.

My fellow Americans, there is a way in which we can stop this wholesale invasion of the Constitution, and a way in
which we can preserve the rights of our states to manage their own affairs.

The States' Rights Democrats stand on the faith that the great Democratic Party can be and will be restored to the type of leadership that gave us Jackson and Cleveland and Wilson. The States' Rights Democrats are firm in the conviction that we can restore the great two-party system of our country to its former glory as a bulwark against the infiltration of foreign ideas and foreign philosophies.

By our efforts in this election, we shall demonstrate that the great Southland is no longer a political football to be kicked around by either party. Our votes will tell the leaders of both major parties that the South is entitled to a respectful hearing on the great questions of the day.

But our work will not be halted on November 2. We will not give up the fight until the Democratic Party has been reclaimed for the principles for which it has stood these hundred years.

Our determination is based on the knowledge that the American people must renew their faith in representative democracy, and in local self-government. We believe that all Americans must become united in that faith, whether they call themselves Democrats
or Republicans or what-not.

We must set our political house in order here in the United States, if we are to meet the tremendous responsibilities of world leadership. And to do so, we must repudiate those who would have us exchange our kind of government for a centralized state.

A political party is only as good as its principles. It is effective as a democratic medium of expression only so long as it remains true to the democratic way of life.

Let us restore our party to faith in the American way, and thereby keep it untainted for posterity.