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States' Rights, 1948 October 29

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 AUSTIN, TEXAS, OCTOBER 29, 1948

MY FELLOW AMERICANS:

In the great, liberty-loving State of Texas, and in the beautiful and historic city of Austin, I am moved to make a rededication to the cause I represent. The soil of Texas is the soil of freedom, and the faith of her people is the faith of democracy itself.

Texas will stand for democracy forever, and for the principles that have made our democracy a living thing in the history of man. In this hour, when those principles are confronted with a severe test, I have an abiding faith that the people of Texas will meet the challenge.

When the people of this State joined the union, they did so out of a free choice. They joined the United States because of its Constitution, which permitted Texas complete freedom of local self-government, and the unassailable right to manage her own internal affairs. They joined because the Constitution made it possible for Texas to participate in all the privileges of union, without the necessity for yielding state sovereignty to a central government at Washington.
The provisions of our Constitution which guarantee the rights of states and the privilege of local self-government have not been changed. And yet, today, President Truman of the Democratic Party is running for President on a platform promise to take away your right to manage your local affairs. Governor Dewey of the Republican Party is running for President on a platform promise to impose the will of a central government in matters over which you have always retained control. Henry Wallace and his Progressives have made the same promise.

These three candidates have promised to impose federal statutes upon you in violation of the Constitution, without putting them to the vote of the people. They have done so to bid against each other for the votes of a minority group in doubtful states. Because they want to be President so badly, they have announced their willingness to sponsor the most wholesale violation of the Constitution ever attempted in this country.

The so-called Civil Rights program sponsored by these three men represents utter contempt for the form of government under which we have become a great nation. It would change the manner in which we control our elections within the states, invade our right to control our state courts and our police, and subject private business to a kind of regimentation which would be a stunning blow to private enterprise.
Whatever Truman, Dewey, and Wallace may think, I have not lost my faith in the citizens of Texas. I am not one of those who has become convinced that Texans no longer have the ability to manage their own internal affairs. I do not believe it is necessary to take this right away from Texas, and to give it to an all-powerful government in Washington.

And I cannot believe that the people of this State will give any candidate for President a mandate to impose an unconstitutional federal pattern upon their daily lives, and thereby surrender their personal liberties.

At a time when the world needs a demonstration by Americans of the effectiveness and the efficiency of the democratic way of life, it is unfortunate that we have had a president willing to stir up racial antagonisms for political gain. It is a shameful thing that such a man was able to force his nomination by the Democratic Party, and to force into its platform his unconstitutional racial bait for the minorities.

President Truman has had little to say about his un-American proposals since he realized that there are millions of Americans who will not take them lying down. But those proposals are still in his platform. He does not repudiate them, because he is still hopeful that they will buy the votes of the minority machine which promises to help swing the election.
Truman's Civil Rights Committee, carefully stacked with members acceptable to the minority machine, not only recommended that the rights of states be abrogated, but asked that federal assistance funds be withheld from states which refused to comply. In other words, President Truman has asked that we give him complete control of our internal affairs, and that we furnish him with a federal horsewhip to sting us into line.

Thus, those of us who are loyal to the historic principles of the Democratic Party were asked to accept as a candidate a bumbling, fumbling little man who tampered with our foreign policies abroad while he tried to break down our form of government at home.

The nomination of Truman at Philadelphia was clear evidence that those who desire to turn our government into a centralized, total state, so that their impractical racial theories may be put into effect, had gained control of the framework of the Democratic Party.

But, my fellow Americans, I am happy to tell you that their control is temporary. I am proud to say that millions of loyal Democrats are determined to cast out the influences which have infiltrated the Party, and to restore it to its historic function as a bulwark for state sovereignty and for local self-government.
We of the States' Rights Democrats are going to cast out the leaders who betrayed us, and rebuild the Democratic Party as a fortress for American constitutional government!

Harry Truman in his campaign has concentrated on domestic issues which would mean little if his promise to change our form of government is carried out. He wants you to forget that he has offered to enforce an unconstitutional program so drastic that all other issues are pale beside it.

And Governor Dewey, uttering soothing and meaningless words which do nothing but endorse things like progress, and peace, and happiness, and prosperity, also wants you to forget that he has committed himself to a program that would violate the Constitution and change our way of life.

Both of these candidates have advocated federal invasion of our state control of elections; federal invasion of our control of state courts and police; federal invasion of our privilege of passing laws to separate the races, and federal invasion of our right to control business and industry within our own states.

Their efforts to centralize power of government in Washington and to destroy the powers of the states, has been put forward in the name of human rights. Many Americans are blinded by the honeyed words of the human rights agitators. Some have been so blinded that they seem to have forgotten that the United States
Constitution is in itself the greatest document for the protection of human rights ever written by man.

They have forgotten that if the basic fundamentals of that Constitution are destroyed, the only means we have of preserving human rights will be gone.

Those Americans who think we are safe from the foreign ideas of totalitarian government that prostrated Europe, had better ask themselves what it is about our Constitution that protects us from dictators. They had better realize that the principle of state control over state affairs, as guaranteed by the Constitution, is the only thing between us and the same kind of tyranny being practiced in Russia today.

Moreover, we must remember that the Congress has come dangerously close to passing the Civil Rights force bills and thereby opening the way for the complete destruction of state control. By the simple method of imposing cloture on the efforts of our Southern members of Congress, the advocates of these measures can force their enactment at any time. And they have already announced that they will try to make the imposition of the cloture rule the first order of business for the Senate next January.

As a matter of fact, Senator Barkley, who is now running for Vice President, attempted to impose the cloture rule to force a vote on the FEPC bill in February, 1946. He came very
near to success. That is how close the Congress has come to violating the Constitution at the demand of the minority machine.

And the sponsorship by Governor Dewey of the vicious FEPC is a clear indication that he will seek its enactment if we do not register our votes against it in this election. It was Dewey's mouthpiece -- Senator Ives of New York -- who wrote the FEPC bill now pending in the Senate. Dewey claims credit for the New York FEPC. Now he announces his intention of forcing the law on the whole nation, without the benefit of a vote by the people.

We do not deny the right of New York to enforce the FEPC, although as a matter of fact the people of that state never did have a chance to vote on it. But we deny the right of Governor Dewey to force it upon all our states, in violation of the Constitution.

The FEPC would destroy the right of a business man or industrial executive to employ persons suitable to his business. More than that, it would actually force a man to employ someone who would not fit into his organization by reasons of race or religion.

The FEPC would destroy the right of a working man to choose his associates on the job and in his union halls. But more important, it would actually force a working man to work beside persons he objected to, and to admit into his labor unions persons he objected to.
My fellow Americans, the rights of freedom of religion and of equal opportunities under the laws are granted by the Constitution. But the Constitution does not grant the Federal Government the right to force a man into involuntary servitude, by forcing him to pay a salary to someone he doesn't want to support, or by forcing him to remain on the job when he prefers to quit. Yet the FEPC proposes to do just that.

Governor Dewey's FEPC in New York makes it easy for a Communist, posing as a person against whom discrimination was being practiced, to plant himself in any secret defense laboratory he desired. In New York you cannot ask such persons the questions which would be necessary to reveal their Communist affiliations. You cannot ask whether he is an atheist, whether he is native-born, who his family was, or even what his military record is. And under the bill written by Governor Dewey's Senator Ives, the Federal Commission would have the right to make the same regulations.

My friends, Truman and Dewey made the Communists happy when they promised to enact the FEPC. For you may be sure the Communists will know how to use it in their effort to spread their evil control into our own land.

There is no doubt in the mind of any thinking Southerner but that the imposition of the impractical racial theories of the FEPC
would set our industrial development back 25 years. Here in Texas and in the rest of the South we have made tremendous gains in raising our standards of living by bringing in new industries. But those gains would be lost if the Federal Government is permitted to send national police down to impose an unworkable racial program on our industries.

It is well known that the leaders of northern industry have attempted to block our industrial development. And it is equally well known that Governor Dewey is working hand-in-glove with northern industry. It was Dewey who offered the most bitter opposition to the effort of Southern Governors to win fair and equal freight rates. Dewey hoped to perpetuate the system which gave northern industry a 39% rate advantage over us. He failed in that attempt. But now he is promising to enforce the FEPC, which would be an even greater blow to our industrial development.

The New York Governor knows virtually nothing of problems and conditions in the South. He has never shown a grasp of that broad national viewpoint which would permit all sections of this nation to seek prosperity under equal conditions. He has never shown an understanding of the unusual nature of southern problems.

And now, instead of offering to help, he has joined President Truman in promising to carry out a program which could not be anything but disastrous to our states. Truman and Dewey are telling us that we are no longer capable of handling our own affairs. And
they are uttering that falsehood in spite of the tremendous gains made by all races in the South since 1865.

But the States' Rights Democrats are saying that you need not accept the FEPC. We are putting Truman and Dewey on notice that we will not vote for and endorse this law to help any man get elected!

Within a few days, both the Republican and the National Democratic parties will be well aware that our states cannot be kicked around for political purposes. When this election is over, your votes for the States' Rights Democrats will have created a new respect for the political rights of our states. By voting together on November 2, we can show the nation that our welfare must be taken into consideration in a manner equal to the consideration shown the big-city states.

With our concerted votes, we can save the principle of the rights of our states to handle their internal problems in a way suitable to their people. And we can defeat forever the effort to enact the so-called Civil Rights bills which would create so much discord among us.

These things may be accomplished by preventing Truman or Dewey from getting a majority electoral vote, and by taking the election to the House of Representatives, where our states will have a better chance. We have that as our aim.
But it is not necessary to elect our own candidates to achieve our objectives. The vote we shall receive will be so large that we may accomplish our primary objective, which is to restore the Democratic Party to its sponsorship of our rights to manage our own affairs. We can remake and reorganize that party so that the nation need not be subjected to a wholesale invasion of the United States Constitution. We shall continue to function as long as it is necessary to gain that objective.

Our determination is based on our faith in the American people to make democracy work. We must bolster up that faith if we are to lead the peoples of the world into the light of peace and happiness for all races and all creeds.

And we must set our own political house in order here in this country, by repudiating the efforts of those who would have us exchange our state sovereignty for state slavery.

Let us join together to return the people of this nation to the principle of government by the consent of the governed, and to the principle of liberty for the individual man.