12-10-1948

Encouraging School Administrators to Take an Active Role in State Affairs

Strom Thurmond

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Recommended Citation
Thurmond, Strom, "Encouraging School Administrators to Take an Active Role in State Affairs" (1948). Strom Thurmond Collection, Mss100. 447.
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It gives me pleasure to extend personal greetings to the members of the South Carolina State Association of School Administrators, and to welcome you to your capitol city. I regret exceedingly that a previous engagement will take me out of the State, so that I cannot be with you in person.

I have always considered our school administrators as being among the leading citizens of this State, and for that reason I want to take this opportunity to urge that you take an ever-increasing interest in public affairs, so that your influence may be felt in matters affecting the welfare of South Carolina.

Our State has made great forward strides during the past two years, with higher appropriations and other much-needed improvements in your own field of education, for both white and Negro races. Other forward steps have included a plan, now being carried out, to reorganize the State government for greater efficiency and economy, and a plan to revise the State Constitution so as to eliminate out-moded provisions. A Commission has been formed to construct wholesale farmers markets, and provision
has been made for construction of important farm-to-market roads.

Another Commission has been created to study reorganization of the Legislative Department, and the program undertaken in the last two years has included many other progressive steps.

There are important matters now pending in the State which deserve the utmost consideration of our citizens. Perhaps the most important is that of educational improvements, with which you are directly concerned. A school Survey authorized by the 1947 General Assembly has just been completed, and an exhaustive report has been made. This survey shows clearly the need for many improvements in our school system. It should receive the careful study of all those interested in a better educational program for South Carolina.

Another important matter now pending is that of the Merit Personnel Bill which I have asked the General Assembly to consider. It provides for more efficiency in the selection of State employees, and creates a fairer method of selection, so that everyone has an equal chance of securing employment. A word to your legislators in favor of this improvement will be helpful.

I believe an important gain has been made in the fact that our people have approved, by a tremendous majority, the Constitutional amendment removing all clemency power from the
Governor except for the granting of reprieves and commutation of death sentences. As Governor, I have not abused the pardoning power, but in past years it has often been abused. I believe restricting this power is a proper move, and I hope you will urge your legislators to ratify it.

Much still remains to be done, and I urge your careful study of the following proposals I have made to the General Assembly: Revised election laws, including provision for a secret ballot; the building of a new State penitentiary to make possible more efficient rehabilitation of our criminal offenders; the establishment of a central purchasing agency for the State government and its institutions; coordination of the educational programs and facilities of our State colleges; a State clinic for treating the disease of alcoholism; and the establishment of an industrial school for Negro girls.

I sincerely hope this brief message will encourage you into a more active participation in the affairs of our State. Our educational leaders, of all people, should be actively interested in public matters, and should make every effort to instill in their students a desire to participate in public affairs.

Permit me to extend my cordial good wishes for a successful and enjoyable meeting.