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Spirit of the New South

Strom Thurmond

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MY FELLOW AMERICANS:

The spirit of the NEW SOUTH, and the traditions of the OLD SOUTH, live in Texas as perhaps in no other state. Here men from all Southern States banded together, braved the bullets of a foreign power, and at great odds won independence and created the Republic of Texas.

More than 100 years have passed, but the picture is still vivid of Houston's army moving up the sloping plain of San Jacinto. When within 20 yards of the Mexican army, Houston gave the signal which sent the Texans roaring forward, drawing their knives and shouting -- "Remember the Alamo!"

No fight for freedom was more heroic, and no victory in the cause of liberty more thrilling, than that of Sam Houston and his Southern frontiersmen.

My friends, in the same spirit and with like courage, we are in Sam Houston's State tonight to carry on this campaign to uphold state sovereignty and wage the fight of the American people to enjoy local self-government and home rule.
Because the Southern States dared to fight to uphold the political doctrine which has made this the greatest nation on earth, abuse and humiliation were heaped upon them at the national convention in Philadelphia.

That collectivist crew, which took over the Democratic Party in Philadelphia, believed that no amount of abuse would cause the South to fight back.

When that so-called Democratic convention stamped under its feet the ideals of Thomas Jefferson, Democracy caught the train for Birmingham. We left in Philadelphia only the shell of the Democratic Party.

The political doctrines of Jefferson and Jackson are just as sound, and just as necessary to good government, and just as essential to preserve the liberties of the people as they were when these two great Americans led the nation. Today, it is the States' Rights Democratic Party, and our Party alone, which stands for the principles of Jefferson and Jackson in this Presidential campaign.

Philadelphia in 1948 was the Alamo of the Democratic Party, the party which we of the South have loved and supported with unswerving loyalty for over a hundred years.

We are resolved that those who debauched our party,
those who butchered the ideals which made it great, and those who
stabbed the loyal South in the back, shall not go unpunished.

The spirit which built this Republic is on the march
again. We are going to drive from the temple of government the
Hagues, the Kellys, and the Pendergasts. When we do this we must
see to it that they are not replaced by the Grundys, the Pews, and
their camp followers.

Those who want to bring about the centralization of
political power in the Federal Government and destroy the reserved
rights of the states of the union -- the most effective safeguard
against the development of national socialism in America -- are
using for their purpose the so-called Civil Rights program.

They have gone back in American history, and dug up
the very measures which Thaddeus Stevens conceived in his hatred of
the South, following the War Between the States. When Congress
passed the Thaddeus Stevens program, the Supreme Court of the United
States promptly declared the legislation unconstitutional -- even
in the atmosphere of Reconstruction -- and upheld in all its vigor
the doctrine of States' Rights.

To these discredited measures have been added
proposals which even Thaddeus Stevens himself would not have stood
for.
They advocate principles and precedents which, if adopted, will inevitably bring about a change in the very form of our American government. They advocate concepts which will destroy the fundamentals of our American way of life. They rekindle sectional prejudice to aid them in jamming their program through. They divert the attention of the people of the nation from their devious designs by dressing up the program in the fair mantle of "human rights".

Recorded history teaches us that the most virulent assaults upon the liberty of the people have been screened by the most benevolent stated purposes.

Take the proposed Federal anti-poll tax law for example. With only 7 states still retaining a poll tax as a voting requirement -- and most of these on the way to repeal -- this measure would be unimportant to anyone, if it were not for the precedent which it would set. That precedent, however, would revolutionize the whole basis of representative self-government in the United States. By it the Federal government would seize power to prescribe voting qualifications and regulate elections within the states, although the Constitution gave such power to the states and denied it to the Federal government.

The Federal anti-lynching bill is of the same stripe.
Its proponents brush aside the fact that there was only one lynching in the whole year 1947, and that this brutal and cowardly form of murder has been virtually stamped out everywhere. Every state has laws against murder and most have specific laws against lynching. Under this Federal legislation, the Congress would be called upon to seize from the state courts their function of dealing with crimes occurring in their states, and this in the face of the division of governmental power written into the Constitution itself.

The people of this nation do not intend to let the Federal government come in and take over the functions of our state courts.

The program goes further and advocates the setting up of a Federal super police system in the Department of Justice. Its agents would circulate throughout the land, meddling with private business, policing elections, intervening in private lawsuits, breeding litigation, keeping our people in a constant state of harrassment and duress. This would bring to the American people all of the potential evils of a police-state. Liberty quickly perishes under such a setup, as we have seen in Europe in our own time. It is the business of the states and the local communities to exercise the police power in this country. The people of America do not want the Federal government to usurp the police
function, and thereby sow the seeds of a Gestapo in America.

The next proposal relates to the separation of the races. Its purpose is the ultimate breaking down of the state and local laws, which make it possible for two such different races to live side by side, in large numbers, with harmonious feeling toward each other. Since the Philadelphia convention, we have seen the President, as commander-in-chief, issue an anti-segregation order to the armed forces, although military leaders have declared that this policy will weaken our national defense.

Such a policy will lower the morale of our soldiers and jeopardize the safety of our nation and politicians who advocate it are not laws providing for the separation of the races apply to each race alike. They are necessary to public peace and order. They are essential to the protection of the Negro as well as the white man. Those who would set in motion forces and measures having for their purpose social intermingling and racial amalgamation, may as well realize that they cannot compel the acceptance of their goal by either the white or the Negro race in the Southern States.

The most vicious and un-American proposal to break down state lines, and turn America into some kind of a Socialist, or fascist, or communist state, is the so-called Federal FEPC law. This invidious concept is being foisted upon the American people under the false pretense of being a measure to protect the right
to work, and to prevent discrimination on account of race, color, creed or national origin. Such benevolent purposes, however, furnish a smoke-screen for the most dangerous assault upon the fundamental liberties of the American people ever conceived by the mind of man.

Under this kind of a law, no man could any longer call his private business his own. He would no longer have the right to employ whom he pleases, or whom he considers best suited to carry on his work and get along with his other employees. He cannot promote or demote as his judgment demands. The way is opened for any person whom a business man may not hire, or may not promote, or may happen to fire, to claim discrimination, and haul that business man before a Federal commission to answer the charge. Federal agents will then have access to his records. He will be harassed and investigated every time such a charge is made by anyone against him. From the point of view of the employee, this law is also most objectionable. Under it employees would lose their right to choose their associates, either on the job or in their private labor organizations.

Everyone knows that another war threatens. Everyone has recently learned of the infiltration of Communist spies into our government and our critical industries. You may be sure that
the Communists will use the FEPC law to serve their purposes. By clamoring for their rights under the FEPC they will force their agents and saboteurs into every tool and die room, every machine shop, and every industrial plant and laboratory, atomic or otherwise, in America.

The FEPC law was made to order for Communist use, in their designs upon our national security. The American people are not going to fashion and furnish to our Communist enemies such a tool for our own destruction!

This country needs less Federal bureaucracy in the affairs of the people, not more of it. The FEPC law would mean Federal bureaucracy at its worst. The constitution does not grant to the Federal government the right to regulate business and employment within the states. That right is reserved to the several states. If the people permit that right to be destroyed, regimentation of our people in America will have arrived in full dress. Our people do not want it, and will not stand for it.

There are four parties in this Presidential campaign. The other three have advocated the FEPC law in their platforms. Governor Dewey has already sponsored such a law in the State of New York, and I think it is bad enough as a state proposition. To impose it on the whole nation is unthinkable. The States'
Rights ticket is the only one which the people can vote for, to protest the surrender of their liberties to a national FPC.

Evil days have fallen upon American political life. The representative character of our democratic processes have been perverted by small minority blocs, which swing back and forth, from party to party, for the purpose of establishing a nuisance value in election years. For their political favors they exact a terrible price. We stand aghast at the spectacle of the major political parties, and even the President of the United States, yielding to their unconstitutional dictates and demands.

When a minority bloc can claim, without successful contradiction, that it exercises political control over 17 states of the Union by such tactics, the time has come for the great rank and file of the major political parties to protest their own voice in governmental affairs. Unless we stop this bloc bidding and blind voting American democracy will be wrecked.

It is particularly shameful that our national leadership should again countenance new Reconstruction measures, aimed at the South, to buy the favor of minority blocs.

Southerners feel that they have earned the right to be free from sectional assaults of this kind. Not only did the South furnish much of the leadership under which this nation won
its freedom and came into being, but its sons and daughters have
marched under the Stars and Stripes in three major wars since
Appomattox, and none has excelled them in bravery and devotion to
Country. No section of the nation has more solidly supported our
foreign policy and preparedness program than the South.

The time has come for our national leadership to stop
making war on one section of the nation and lead a united people on
the path to international security and peace.

No people in the history of the world have faced
greater problems and done more to solve them than have the Southern
people since the War Between the States. They had no Marshall Plan
to aid them. They not only had to care for themselves, but they
also had to care for the millions of slaves in their midst who were
freed as a war measure and then left to their fate.

Instead of sympathy and understanding in the task,
the South had to struggle against discriminatory freight rate
differentials and the destructive effect upon their economy of the
high tariffs, which were imposed upon them as the price of their
defeat.

Not until 1947 did the Southern and Western states win
their fight for equal freight rates before the Interstate Commerce
Commission and the courts. Governor Dewey led the opposition of
the Northern states to the removal of this economic barrier against
the South and West, insisting that differentials in freight rates
are necessary to protect northern industry against cheap labor in
other sections.

How in the world do those who sit in the seat of the
scornful and belittle our progress expect us ever to be able to
solve our economic problems and better the lot and increase the
wages of our white and Negro workers alike, if Governor Dewey pro-
poses to keep us in the strait jacket of cheap labor by perpetua-
ting discriminatory freight rates?

Let me remind you that this is the same Governor Dewey
who advocated the vicious FEPC in New York State, where it is now a
dire threat of what may be forced upon the entire nation if Dewey
or Truman or Wallace is elected. After taking a stand in favor of
unfairness in freight rates, and after sponsoring the FEPC, how
can Mr. Dewey afford to lay claim to a single vote in the South?

Under crushing handicaps, our people, white and Negro
alike, have worked to raise their economic level of life.

It should never be forgotten that the amazing economic
and educational progress which the Negroes have made in the South
in so short a period in the history of mankind has almost entirely
been due to the white men and women in the Southern States who have
been their good neighbors.
The solution of our racial problems will follow the solution of our section's economic problems, and will not be accomplished in any other way. Those who from the outside attempt to deal with them by unconstitutional government meddling will only hinder and delay the task.

It may appear that the current assault is only on the South, but the methods and measures are of equal danger to the fundamental rights of the people in every state in the Union. With such precedents on the books, other pretexts could be found to invade the rights of other states, and no one knows just where the next blow to constitutional government may fall.

The question is, what can we do about it? I want to answer that question.

Politics is the science of government. I have long been a student of government and practical politics. I would never have agreed to lead this fight unless I was satisfied that we could bring about practical and beneficial results.

States' Rights Democrats have three main objectives in this campaign.

First, we shall oppose the centralization of power in Washington.

Secondly, we shall inform the people that the American way of life is threatened by the catering of both Democratic and
Republican leaders to the demands of minority blocs.

Thirdly, we shall restore the South to her rightful place in the political life of the nation.

We propose to accomplish these things by using the electoral powers granted our people by the Constitution. Already three states are pledged to us. Similar pledges will come from other states, and we expect to receive more than 100 votes in the Electoral College. If Dewey and Truman split up the remaining electoral votes, the election will be decided by the House of Representatives. There, each state will have one vote, and the smaller states will have the same voice as the Big-City States. Our votes—and not the minority bloc votes—will then be the balance of power. And we shall use that power for the benefit of every state.

Those who claim that our ticket is helping Tom Dewey are sadly mis-informed. The Republicans have espoused the very proposals we are fighting. Our ticket will not get Governor Dewey any electoral votes. Instead, we will take from him the votes he might have gained from people who are determined to protest the shabby treatment received by the South at the hands of the Democratic national leadership.

The people of the South have everything to gain and
nothing to lose by rallying solidly behind the States' Rights ticket.

There is not the slightest doubt that the overwhelming majority of the people in the Southern States are behind this movement.

As this campaign progresses, people throughout America will be looking toward the South to see whether we have the courage of our convictions and the moral stamina to fight for what we know is right.

My friends, I am convinced that Texas and the balance of the Southland will not yield to undemocratic and un-American principles, but will stand up and fight to the last ditch for what is right.