9-30-1948

States Rights Democratic Party statement at press conference, Washington, DC

Strom Thurmond

Follow this and additional works at: https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/strom

Materials in this collection may be protected by copyright law (Title 17, U.S. code). Use of these materials beyond the exceptions provided for in the Fair Use and Educational Use clauses of the U.S. Copyright Law may violate federal law.

For additional rights information, please contact Kirstin O'Keefe (kokeefe [at] clemson [dot] edu)

For additional information about the collections, please contact the Special Collections and Archives by phone at 864.656.3031 or via email at cuscl [at] clemson [dot] edu

Recommended Citation
https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/strom/581

For additional information about the collection, please contact the Special Collections and Archives by phone at 864.656.3031 or via email at cuscl [at] clemson [dot] edu

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Manuscript Collections at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in Strom Thurmond Collection, Mss100 by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATES RIGHTS DEMOCRATIC PARTY
WASHINGTON OFFICE

STATEMENT BY J. STROM THURMOND, GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA, STATES RIGHTS DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AT A PRESS CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON, D. C.

SEPTEMBER 30, 1948

It is a pleasure to hold this conference with Washington news correspondents. I hope that by meeting with you and answering your questions I can bring about a better understanding of the fight we are making for state sovereignty and constitutional government.

As Washington correspondents, most of you, regardless of your personal feelings or the attitude of your papers, desire to give your readers a fair presentation of the issues upon which we are waging this campaign.

Before answering your questions I desire to read a brief statement.

Most of you are familiar, I am sure, with the background of the States Rights movement. The President appointed a special committee to study "Civil Rights". The Committee made its report, and it gathered dust in the White House until there was a special Congressional election in the Bronx.

Democratic politicians in New York City frightened the President into believing that unless he did something drastic Henry Wallace's candidate was going to secure the Negro vote.

Thereupon, those around the President dusted off the "Civil Rights" committee report and the most astonishing Presidential message in American history was transmitted to the Congress.

The nation and the Congress were dumbfounded that a President, and a Democratic President at that, would ask for the passage of Federal laws clearly in violation of the Constitution.

(More)
The President put the Republicans on the spot, and it seemed for a time that despite all we could do these so-called "Civil Rights" measures would be rammed through Congress as political bait in a presidential election.

Fortunately, before the President's message the Southern Governors had scheduled a meeting at Tallahassee. Our purpose was to increase educational facilities in the South, and particularly to save an existing Negro medical college at Memphis, which was about to close.

The Southern Governors condemned the President and his so-called "Civil Rights" program. I was named chairman of a committee of Southern Governors to confer with the Democratic national leadership in the hope that we could prevent the party from following a course which we knew would inevitably result in the defeat of the party in the coming Presidential election.

Our pleas were rejected and our advice was scorned. The present national party leadership was convinced that the South was "in the bag" and would swallow anything which was done by them in bidding for the votes of minority blocs in other sections.

All of you know what happened in Philadelphia. Not only did the Democratic convention repudiate by roll call vote the party's traditional principle of States Rights, but it also nominated Mr. Truman and pledged the enactment of his unconstitutional proposals.

There was nothing left for true Democrats to do but fight if we were to maintain our self-respect and give to the people who believe in the principles of the Democratic party a ticket in the Presidential election around which they could rally.

The States Rights Democratic campaign is based upon fundamental governmental principles, the preservation of which is of vital concern to every
American citizen in every section of the nation.

A great many people are deceived by the name "Civil Rights" given to the legislative proposals which we challenge as violating these principles. While the immediate legislative measures purport to deal with civil rights, their enactment would overturn all constitutional precedents to date on the division of sovereignty between the States and the Federal government, and would also distort or ignore plain and positive provisions of the Constitution prohibiting such legislation.

The enactment of these measures would establish clear precedents for the Congress

(a) to take over control of elections and of voting qualifications in the States (anti-poll tax bill);

(b) to usurp the functions of the State legislatures and of the State courts in dealing with crimes occurring within the States (anti-lynching bill);

(c) to interfere with State and local laws dealing with the separation of the two races (anti-segregation recommendations);

(d) to assume the right to regulate private businesses and private employment within the States (FEPC bill); and

(e) to create a national police force, thereby invading the field and functions of state, county, city and town policemen, and of duly elected sheriffs, a long step toward a police state in America (Civil Rights Division in the Department of Justice).

The enactment of these measures would require Congress to defy constitutional provisions and decisions of the courts which have stood unchallenged for many decades.

Whatever the differing motives of those who misguidedly favor some or all of these proposals, whether well-intended and benevolent or devious and malignant,
it is obvious that their enactment will radically change the government of the United States of America laid down in 1787 in the Constitution and upheld, protected and defended by every generation of the American people since that time.

In their platforms this year, the major political parties have advocated such radical change in our government. Their action left the American people no way of expressing their opposition to such change at the ballot box. When the Democratic party abdicated its historic function in American political life of opposing the centralization of power in the Federal government and opposing Federal encroachment on the sovereignty of the States, the States Rights Democrats came into being virtually spontaneously to perform that function and give the people a chance to express themselves.

The American people must understand that while the most vigorous opposition to this unconstitutional program is for the time being coming from the South, it is imperative that all Americans join in such opposition if they are to protect their individual liberties under the Constitution.

When the States Rights Democrats nominated their own candidates for President and Vice-President, they felt that if they could carry the electoral votes of even a single State they would win a victory for their cause.

The movement has gained such widespread and enthusiastic support that it now appears probable that we shall go into the electoral college with over 100 electoral votes. This may well prevent any candidate from getting a majority in the electoral college, and the President will have to be chosen by the House of Representatives as the Constitution provides. In the House, each State casts a single vote, and the candidates voted for by the House are the highest three in the electoral college. It is the new House which will choose the President if no candidate has a majority in the electoral college, and the smaller states

(More)
will have an excellent chance, for the first time in recent history, to name a
President whom they want, because they will have the balance of power.

It is not necessary, however, that we win the Presidency to gain our objec-
tives. We feel certain that as the result of the States Rights movement we will
bring about the rededication of the Democratic Party to its traditional principles
and return it to the discharge of its historic functions in the nation's political
affairs. We will crystallize sentiment against the enactment of the dangerous
legislation which we oppose, and thereby strengthen the position of those in the
Congress who are standing firmly on the principle of States Rights. We shall
regain for the South a voice in the political affairs of the nation. We shall
demonstrate that it is unprofitable for national political leaders to traffic for
the favor of minority blocs to the jeopardy of the liberties of the American
people.

From what I have said, I believe you must realize that the fight we are
making is not motivated by racial prejudice. The relationship between the two
races in the South is generally misunderstood elsewhere. All thinking Southerners
know that the solution of the South's economic problems will depend to a large
degree on the educational and economic gains of our Negro population. Our progress
as a section must be brought about by both races working together and living in
harmony side by side as good neighbors.

Racial integrity as well as peace and good order requires laws providing
for the separation of the two races. We believe in racial integrity and are
opposed to racial "integration". The former is for the best interest of each
race; the latter is good for neither.

As every enlightened person knows, the vast majority of the people of the
South have been striving to improve the economic and educational level of the Negro.

(More)
I challenge anyone to show where in the history of civilization one race has done more for another race than the white people of the South have done for the Negroes in their midst.

Modern force bills will only delay the progress which we are determined to continue to achieve. We are fighting for the rights of our States; we shall not neglect their correlative responsibilities.
We are not too confident in the supreme courts of the day—and cannot afford with bare unconstitutionality bills being enacted into law.