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Address of J. Strom Thurmond, Governor of South Carolina, at Dedication of Ceremonies of Radio Station WTYC, Rock Hill, South Carolina, 3:30 PM, Sunday, May 2, 1948

Strom Thurmond

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Today marks an occasion which will long be remembered in this section. A new force has begun operation in South Carolina. This is Radio Station WTYC, which is conducting its dedicatory program today.

With this broadcast, WTYC joins a large number of radio stations in South Carolina; and it joins an industry that is dedicated to public service and to the progress of civilization. That progress comes through education, entertainment and information. Radio has a real public trust to present such programs as will benefit the masses of people and will assist them to raise their standards of living and increase their prosperity and enjoyment.

This Radio Station has pledged itself to participate generously in such programs as will serve the public interest. By so doing, it should help this section to broaden its economic base and to develop both agriculturally and industrially. It should take a leading role in the progress of South Carolina.

The growth of radio stations in our State is a real indication of their importance to our people. As recently as two years ago, there were only about 15 stations in South Carolina, and most of them were located in the larger cities. Today, that number has nearly doubled and numerous others are in process of construction and will soon be ready to begin operation. I believe that a significant trend has been developed by these new radio stations. Most of them are in the smaller cities of the State. They are serving local audiences on a local basis. They are filling a need that apparently has not been filled before.
There is something almost akin to magic in radio. Standing before a microphone, a man may send his voice all over the world in a flash. Radio is instantaneous. It is becoming an increasingly potent force in the development of our civilization.

To an increasing extent, radio has developed into a true voice of history. In recent years, political leaders in the nation and the world have turned more and more to radio. In addition to its swiftness, the microphone faithfully reproduces what is said into it. Thus, a speaker cannot be misquoted nor misunderstood. What goes into the microphone comes out of your radio. The living history which radio transmits day by day has an important affect on the lives of all of us. If radio and free communication existed in the years before our generation, we would possibly be now living in a better world.

The public service which radio gives so unstintingly is vital to the American way of life. Every day, over our radios, we hear news practically as it develops. We are kept constantly abreast of developments all over the world through the means of radio. Time is always available without charge on our radio stations for the presentation of worthwhile forums and discussions which do much to bring us better understanding and background of present day issues.

The agricultural news broadcast by radio stations results in increased benefits to farmers. Radio is always in the forefront of campaigns for civic betterment.

In America, more than in any other nation, we have the blessings of a free radio. The Federal Government, unlike many other governments, does not maintain a state radio system. That is why American radio is better than any other in the world.
In years not so long gone, we have seen what may happen when nations make radio their creature. In Germany, Dr. Goebbels used radio to whip the people of the Reich into a frenzy for war. In Italy, Mussolini used radio to inflame the peaceful Italian people for the same course. The state radio of Japan paved the way for the kamikazes of Okinawa. Now the state radio of Russia is building up suspicion and hatred for the Western democracies.

State radio systems have worked along the lines of democratic principles. Great Britain so controls radio. But in the minds of thoughtful people, national employment of radio — even in the hands of so fair and just a people as the British — remains a potential threat against democratic rights. Governments are no better than the men who make them up. Power-mad governments can forbid — and have forbidden — the right of criticism to their opposition. And democracy does not thrive without opposition.

The United States government regulates radio wisely. Because radio frequencies are the property of the people, it licenses commercial stations for stated periods. It may withdraw those licenses if it finds that such stations are not operated in "the public interest, the public convenience, and the public necessity." This is right and proper. Radio frequencies are limited, and it is not fair that anyone should have perpetual ownership of them.

The Federal government does not tell American radio what programs it can transmit. American radio is not required to praise the government of any man in it. Radio programs are not censored by the government.

As Governor of South Carolina, I can speak my mind over this radio
today. If I were a farmer, or a mechanic, or a professor, or a stenographer, I could do the same thing. The government of the United States does not decide whether or not I can speak. It does not have any idea of what I may say. Any South Carolinian—or any American—may stand before this same microphone and criticize my administration. The right to criticize their government is denied to most of the peoples of the world.

Under this freedom American radio has flourished. Tonight, you may turn the dial of your radio and pick up a hundred radio stations. You may get as many different programs. You may hear news, music, drama, opinion, politics. All of these would be gloriously independent. But if you lived in Russia, you would hear only what the Kremlin wanted you to hear. What came out of your radio would be scientifically-applied propaganda.

In essence, what this means is that American radio has developed in accordance with the American tradition of individual freedom. Because it has developed in such a way, it has woven itself into American life. Radio is no longer a luxury—it is a necessity. Because of the American radio and the American press, we are better informed, and more quickly informed, than any other people. We know more of what is going on—both in America and abroad—than any other people. That is why we are the world's best guarantors of democracy. For people make their decisions on the basis of information, and fully informed people cannot be led down the trail by demagogues. The Bible says, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make ye free."

To the best of my knowledge, the American government has no plan
to assume direct control over radio. Such a design would be unthinkable to all of us. But sometimes—even in America—a sinister figure may arise who cannot stand the white glare of publicity. He will want to throttle radio because it will be dangerous to his plans. When that time comes, our democracy will be in grave peril. If the radio goes, the press will be next.

Radio demonstrated during the past war that it is fully responsible and can be trusted to the utmost. No censors were placed in American radio stations, as they were in other nations. I have never heard of one instance in which a radio station broadcast information which imperiled our security.

I salute American radio for its great contributions in our way of life. I salute American radio for the pleasure which it has brought—free of all cost—into our lives. And above all, I salute it as one of the foremost guardians of American liberties.

When the men and women of our nation fought in the war just past, they all believed that they were engaged in a mighty crusade to make a better world. The tyranny of Germany, Italy and Japan had to be stopped by force or it would have been extended throughout the world. We had just reason to believe that at the end of that great war we would be in the best position since the beginnings of history to enjoy the fruits of freedom. However, we all know now that our liberty is still in grave danger because of Russia.

We Americans have always been in the vanguard of the unending battle for freedom. Because we have enjoyed more freedom than most people of the world, we are united in determination to prevent any infringement upon our
way of life. If necessary, we will fight again against tyranny.

The situation with regard to Russia today is most serious, but it is by no means hopeless. Reviewing the history of Communist Russia, we find that the Kremlin has extended its dominion over vast areas of Europe and Asia. One significant lesson is easily apparent in Russia’s campaign of conquest. This is that every nation which the Russians have taken has been unprepared both militarily and morally to fight for its freedom.

To the Russians, agreements and treaties are made as matters of temporary expedience. The Russians do not hesitate to break them whenever it is convenient. However, in our dealings with the Russians, we have found without exception that they do respect one thing, and that is physical force.

Because we demobilized so swiftly at the war’s end, the Russians inferred that we had abandoned Europe and Asia to their fate and furthermore that the United States itself would prove to be easy prey. The absence of American armies, navies and air forces in being gave them enough confidence to advance their schedule. We now recognize that our rapid demobilization is responsible in great part for Russia’s success so far.

But we have learned our lesson well. We know that the only way to stop Russian aggression is to rebuild our armed might. Confronted by the United States as a first class power, Russia will probably cease because she is not ready for war at this time. She hopes to conquer the world without war. Russia will not attack us if convinced this nation is prepared.

We American citizens must pledge our willingness and determination/
to pay the price of peace so that we may continue to enjoy the right of freedom. This indicates that whatever the cost, we must build our armed forces to the peak of efficiency by whatever means are necessary. We must back the defense measures which are advocated by those who are in the best position to know.

Russia will take it as an evidence of weakness if we deny our armed forces adequate facilities. Until these present troubled times are past, it might well prove to be fatal to the cause of peace if we were to show any weakness.

I urge all of my listeners today to give their most serious thoughts to this perilous situation and renew their determination to keep America free.

Radio can play a most important role in the cause of peace by informing the people fully on present-day issues. Free radio, which keeps our people constantly aware of conditions throughout the world, is invaluable.

Radio's services toward this end have been great factors in the history of our time. In peace and in war, radio is to be commended for its high standards of excellence. Radio Station WTYC, I am confident, will meet the responsibility and challenge that lie before it. I offer WTYC my best wishes in its mission of service to the people. Thank you.