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Address to American Legion banquet on national security training

Strom Thurmond

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The defense of the United States is the business of the people of the United States. The protection of our lives and our property is not merely the duty of the armed forces in this country. It is the duty of the people themselves.

Our military triumph in World War II was the result of the concerted action of all our people. Our Army was a people's army, our Navy a people's navy. Wherever they served, our armed forces had the virtues and the faults of the people themselves.

The citizens of the United States won that war, and what the people won, the people must maintain. We know, therefore, that America's first line of defense lies in the proper understanding by our citizens of the people's duties in defending this nation against attack. We must educate our citizens—in the home, the church, the school, and from the public platform—to accept their individual responsibilities to our national security.

It is my sincere belief that the most democratic approach to our people's responsibility for defense is universal military
training. Such a system is the most reasonable and the most realistic course we can follow to insure an effective preparedness program.

Proposals made last year for a system of universal military training were set aside by the Congress in favor of a renewal of the Selective Service System, which is now in force. The draft, however, is not an adequate substitute for universal training. Any new session of Congress may set aside the draft, reduce its terms, or make it largely ineffective. Universal training, on the other hand, will provide a permanent means of preparing our young men for the military service which they may one day be compelled to render. It will also serve to convince our enemies abroad that we mean business, and that we intend to be ready at all times to defend our shores against invasion.

Modern warfare methods are such that we can no longer depend on a regular standing army, navy, and air force. Total war demands total defense. Every man who can serve his country in an emergency must be trained in advance and ready for instant call. Universal training is the only policy which will insure that all able-bodied men of an age for military service will be ready when called.
have noticed that unspoken estimates to necessary to our nation's needs.

The question of where we are and why other information gathering
the peace policy of the United Nations to that on those necessary.

The objection that unspoken estimates will undermine

would have

of the future until we release those men to serve once again required in
one of the reasons that need. Experience estimate that a reconstruction will
have been attempted to the annual board. The question to that the board
some persons claim that the need for large numbers

not we substantiated
are seen, only to be rejected by Congress, when the instruction is to

if not, passed on, George Washington himself, first proposed such a
a European nation. On the contrary, the annual meeting and any other
is to hold, for instance, that unpreparedness is not adequate, however, if which be well to answer some of the charges
in view of the fact that some objections have honest
the source when we hear such objections.

As well known, and we must understand to our own end to consider.

The necessity of the communists in the United States in the next few
the unprepared estimate plan may be viewed to supervise the course. A
now of the objections which have been made publicly.
Then there is the claim that our boys would suffer moral deterioration in training camps, and that they would become "military-minded". This is completely false. Our new Army leaders are convincing the nation that they can operate training programs which will serve to benefit the trainee physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually. As one illustration, a survey has shown that only 11 out of 100 boys in civil life attend church regularly. But the records of army chaplains show that 28 out of 100 in the armed services attend services regularly. More effort is probably made in a military camp to encourage good moral conduct than is ever exerted in civil life.

The claim that our young men do not want universal training also has been proved untrue. A nation-wide opinion poll, conducted by Purdue University, showed that 82 per cent of the nation's high school students favored such training, while 9% were against it, and 9% undecided. Most of the youths questioned believed that the United States will be at war again within 25 years-- and they want to be ready.

These are facts which should be given widespread publication, so that the true attitude of our people toward universal training may be known. In this connection, the American Legion's National Security Commission has recommended that the term "universal Military
training" should be dropped, and the designation "national security training" be used instead. The new term indicates the true nature of the training, and is a more appropriate choice.

Whatever it is called, this system is a vital part of our over-all preparedness program, which should also include the following essentials: a Total Mobilization Board composed of civilians which would be ready to mobilize our nation when war strikes; adequate civilian defense measures; a continuing inventory of our war potential in natural resources and raw materials; an adequate scientific research program; more complete unification of our armed services; an intelligence service that is world wide in scope; a merchant marine second to none in existence; effective armed forces on the ground, at sea, and in the air; and an adequately supported organized reserve and National Guard.

In connection with the National Guard, the Gray Board Report to the Secretary of Defense, which recommends many of the above items, also recommends that the Guard be unified with the reserve and placed under federal control. All true Americans should oppose this recommendation because it would violate the basic principles of our government and weaken our national defense.
While we are striving to keep our ramparts of defense strong, we must not overlook what transpires within our shores that tends to gnaw at the very vitals of democracy. We have insidious forces inspired by foreign governments at work inside the United States, seeking to undermine our government. We cannot, and we will not, permit groups under the direction of a foreign political bureau to seek to create unrest among our people, with the ultimate objective of overthrowing our constitutional form of government.

But, while fighting such influences from abroad, we must at the same time realize that government has certain definite responsibilities to perform here at home, both in the fields of economic security and social welfare. One of these responsibilities is that the federal and state governments must work in unison to provide for our national defense and to promote the general welfare of our people.

There are those who would mislead our people into believing that in this atomic age we cannot adequately provide for the national defense and the general welfare of our people, and at the same time preserve the rights of the individual states as provided in our Constitution.

I tell you this is a mistaken conception. There is no real conflict between those of us who intend to preserve the
Constitutional rights of the states, and those who believe in
the most powerful national defense possible.

I realize that what some of us in the South
consider as basic principles of government, are regarded by
some people in other sections of the country as merely prejudice.
Often it may be that what is regarded as prejudice to some, is
a deep-seated conviction to others.

The people of South Carolina are wedded to the
doctrine of state sovereignty. We enjoy the blessings of local
self-government and home rule, through a state government duly
constituted by the will of our people at the ballot box. The
proper functions of our State government must not be usurped
or invaded, either from without or from within our State.

There is no more important function of the State
government than law enforcement. It is the responsibility of
the State to see that all its laws are impartially enforced.
No individual or organization can ever be permitted to take the
law into their own hands, and by force or intimidation mistreat
citizens of the State.

One of the most precious freedoms is that of
free speech and assembly. This freedom exists for those with
whom we do not agree, as well as for those with whom we do agree.
If it were not so, the rights of individuals and of those in a minority would always be subject to suppression by the majority prevailing at any particular time. But the exercise of freedom of speech and assembly, must be made with due regard to the rights of others to be free from threats or intimidation.

As long as I am Governor and the chief law enforcement officer of the State, it is my duty to rigidly enforce the statutes. This I intend to do. Our people must never be subjected to unlawful threats, intimidations, or assaults. I think it well for me to call to the attention of our citizens Section 1131 of the South Carolina Code, which reads as follows:

"It shall be unlawful for any person, individually or as a group of individuals, assembled under any pretext whatsoever, while wearing a mask or otherwise disguised, to assault, offer to assault, threaten, menace or intimidate any other person or persons, and any person convicted of same shall be deemed guilty of a felony and be punished by a penalty of not less than one year nor more than ten (10) years at hard labor upon the chain gang of the county wherein the crime is committed or for a like period in the state penitentiary."

In order that there may be no misunderstanding on the part of anyone, I would like our citizens to know that
I intend to see that this statute is enforced, and that those who may violate it are brought to justice.

Our need to be prepared for war carries with it the necessity for a united effort which will bring forth the energy and capability of all our citizens. We must continue to live and work in harmony, so that we may present a united front to the world in this time of crisis.

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