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Congratulations on new Negro community hospital and statement about the advancement of Negroes in South Carolina

Strom Thurmond

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I welcomed the invitation to address this meeting for two reasons: first, because as Governor of South Carolina I am proud of the contribution you have made to the health and welfare of this community by erecting this splendid new $100,000 hospital; and second, because I want to speak to you as citizens of South Carolina about many problems that concern us all.

You have every right to be proud of your achievement in raising the necessary funds and carrying through to completion this splendid project. Your community and your State are proud of you for it. One of the most important needs of our State is that of improving the health standards of our Negro citizens — and you have done something about it. I congratulate and commend you, as well as all the other citizens, white and colored, who contributed to the erection of this hospital.

Hospitals are particularly important factors in the health situation in the South. The size of our colored population, and the need for training additional Negro physicians, nurses, and medical attendants, make the opening of a new hospital an important event. A survey made in 1944 showed a total of 124 Negro hospitals in the United States. Of this number, 98 hospitals were located in the Southern states, 7 of them in South Carolina. A new hospital, therefore, is a major development.

We in South Carolina have had a long and hard struggle toward a better existence for our people. Economic underprivilege has known no color line in the South. It has fallen heavily on both races alike. We have made progress in the face of handicaps which would long since have crushed a less hardy and determined people. Working together in the best interests of our State, we shall continue that progress. The people of South Carolina must and shall have economic opportunities commensurate with those afforded in other sections of the nation, and this goal can only be achieved as the sum total of the efforts of all our people.
Our generation has the responsibility of this task to bear, and we can discharge it only by maintaining, against all the forces which seek to divide us, the harmonious relationships which for so many years have existed between the two races in our State. This is essential to the maximum contribution of both toward a better and more abundant life for all of our people.

Most of you are aware of the striking progress which has been made by the Negroes of our State under the traditional relationship of our peoples. But the great tragedy of our common situation today is that agitators from outside our borders have violently distorted the facts to serve their selfish ends. They have played a dishonest game with the truth. They are stirring up the fears of colored men and white men alike, and trying to put them one against the other.

Race fear is a terrible thing. It gives rise to race prejudice and race hatred, and these bring violence and death. History is replete with illustrations of its destructive effect.

Those who seek to exploit race prejudice for their own ends do not really serve the colored race. They enlarge and magnify every difference between us, heedless of the fundamental good will that prevails. They belittle our efforts to make progress. They seek to use a whole race as a pawn in the game they are playing. A few weeks ago I received a letter from a colored man who had been so used. He wrote me that his false backers had quickly dropped him after they had cost him his job, and had refused to pay him a large sum of money which they had promised. I quote from his letter: "I have learned a bitter lesson from these professional agitators, and all Negroes should beware of their enticing offers. Only through persistent training in tolerance can attitudes be changed," he concludes, "and the change cannot take place with the forcing of a law upon a group."

Progress in the South is set back every time there is radical agitation of racial problems by persons outside the South, who do not really understand them. A clear illustration may be found in the effort of the Southern states to rescue the Negro Medical College at Meharry, Tennessee, from financial difficulties and keep it open. The plan was for all the Southern states to contribute to this school, in an effort to provide better and immediate medical care for our
colored people. This effort was fought on the heartless ground that it would be an indirect endorsement of separation of the races.

There are also those who have sought to use racial agitation to create ill feeling and economic upheaval in our section of the country as the means of spreading the pernicious doctrines of communism. The agents of the Kremlin have thrived in other countries by arousing race fear and prejudice, and it is natural that they should employ the same technique in this country. But they have failed in the South. Our colored people have evidenced beyond question their abiding belief and faith in the American way of life, and almost to a man have repudiated the false and foreign Communist ideology.

Very few of our people are following the false prophets who preach discord and strife. We are working and living side by side in peace, understanding and mutual respect. We are struggling together for a better Southland, with greater opportunity for all. Just as economic underprivilege has known no color line, so economic, health, welfare and educational advancement will benefit both races alike, and all will have their full share in the fruits of our joint accomplishments.

Both races must turn away from the radical and the demagogue, of whatever race they may be, and seek counsel from men of good will, sound judgment, and sincerity of purpose. Such men know the best interests of our people. They know that tolerance cannot be legislated. They know that mutual good will is a most important factor in the solution of the South's economic problems. They know that, when such problems have been solved, the ultimate solution of our racial problems will follow in short order. They know that both solutions will be retarded, not hastened, by forced and hasty disruption of the traditional framework of racial separation under which so much progress in race relations has been achieved so quickly and the true interests of both races have been served best. They know that history takes longer to live than to read, and that gradual adjustments, even if slower, are more enduring than the disruptive results of ill-considered legislative hot-housing.

Most of you know that I have been in the forefront of the opposition to the so-called Civil Rights Program. I have favored the repeal of the poll tax in this State as a voting requirement in three annual messages to the General Assembly of this State, and a constitutional amendment has finally been proposed.
to our voters at the next general election to bring such repeal about. You all know that I do not and will not stand for mob violence or murder. But I have resisted with all my strength the dangerous precedents which would be created if the Federal government were to invade the field of government of the States under the Constitution, and thereby break down local self-government and the right of the people of America to home rule in purely domestic and local matters.

The great men who established our form of government under the Constitution of the United States knew that centralization of all power in the national government would be a threat to the liberty of the people. They believed that the State governments are bulwarks of individual liberty, and that the right of local self-government in the States would be the surest safeguard against persecution and oppression of the people. They wrote the principle of States' Rights into that portion of the Constitution which we call the Bill of Rights of the American people. The principle is of equal importance to every American, whatever his race, color, creed, or national origin. So long as the rights of our States are preserved, no dictator can lift himself to power over our people and destroy our freedom.

Hitler became a dictator by destroying the rights of the German states. Once he had broken down those rights, the German people had no way to stop him from crushing them under his heel. The same thing can happen in America, if we permit all governmental power to be concentrated in Washington.

The first thing Hitler did after he had broken the power of the German states was to begin his persecution of the Jews. But Hitler's methods would have been the same had the minority been of another color.

We cannot afford to permit the Congress to pass even a single law breaking down the rights of states. That is why I oppose the so-called Civil Rights Program.

Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, and practically every other great Democrat since his time, warned against the violation of this principle of government.
Nevertheless, those who want all power centralized in Washington have used the Civil Rights agitation as a stalking horse in an attempt to accomplish their aims. Propaganda designed to convince the country that Southerners were remiss in the discharge of their duty to our colored citizens was heard throughout the land. Every effort was made to hide the fact that the Negroes in the South have made more progress as a race in the last 80 years than any other group in the history of the world.

The remarkable fact is that this progress has been made in a period of dire impoverishment following the War Between the States. We are even now just beginning to recover from the effects of that unhappy conflict. Discriminatory freight rates kept down our industrial growth and protective tariffs penalized those who sought an existence from agriculture. Our State has been able to do little for our people because we have had little means. In all this period, the people of the South, white and colored alike, suffered together, and together struggled on. We should never forget that we were left to work out our own Salvation together. Today we stand at last on the threshold of unlimited industrial development.

One of America's Great Negro leaders, a New Jersey newspaper editor who has assisted in the erection of Sumter's Community Hospital, Davis Lee, completed a survey of the South last year. He gave his findings in an editorial which has been reprinted, I am informed, in over 700 other newspapers. He said found that the economic opportunity of the Negro was better in the South than in any other region. He became convinced that no section of the country has made more progress in finding a working solution to the racial problem than has the South.

In that editorial he said: "Our fight for recognition, justice, civil rights and equality, should be carried on within the race. Let us demonstrate to the world by our living standards, our conduct, our ability and intelligence that we are the equal of any man and when we shall have done this, the entire world, including the South, will accept us on our terms. Our present program of threats and agitation makes enemies out of our friends."

The facts bear out his judgment, and justify his courage. Oppor-
tunities for the Negro in the South are greater today than ever before. His advantages are increasing rapidly in education, in health, in agricultural and business opportunity. His scale of living is climbing steadily.

An illustration of the manner in which the Negro is taking advantage of his opportunities in the South is that of the insurance business. The National Negro Insurance Association in 1946 listed 45 member companies, of which 27 were in the South. More than half of the members of Negro Underwriters Associations were located in the South. One Negro insurance man in our neighboring State of North Carolina has built up a business worth more than $60,000,000. This man, Charles C. Spaulding, began as a $10-a-month dishwasher. In Atlanta there is a Negro insurance company worth $22,000,000.

Another good example of Negro enterprise is that of the banking business. There are 12 Negro-owned banks in the United States, and 11 of them are in the South— one in Columbia, South Carolina. Several have assets well over the $1,000,000 mark. In 1945, a report showed that 11 Negro banks purchased $13,000,000 in government bonds.

Opportunities in abundance have developed in other business lines, such as undertaking, auto repair, barber shops, beauty parlors, cleaning and pressing establishments, shoe repair, and the like. In these lines, hundreds of fine examples of Negro success may be found right here in South Carolina. Davis Lee reported that no matter what a Negro wants to do in life, he can do it in the South. He cited the example of Ernest Collines, of Spartanburg, a young colored man who operates a large funeral home, a taxicab business, a filling station, a grocery store, several public buses, a night club and a large farm.

Improvement in the economic condition of South Carolina Negroes is marked in the occupation of farming. A large number of our Negroes live and work on the farm. About 61 per cent of all people employed in agriculture in this State are colored. Let us see how they are faring.

All our colored farm operators began 80 years ago as either tenants or share-croppers. Today, many of them own their farms, and many others are
buying them. In 1945, the census showed 17,963 Negro farm owners in South Carolina. Of all owners of farms, 35% were colored — which is a high figure when you consider that the proportion of colored in our total population is now 42%.

Many colored farmers have paid for their farms by retiring long-term loans. The Farmers Home Administration informs me that 328 Negroes have made farm ownership loans through this agency, and that in only a few cases are they falling behind in their payments. A total of 112 Negro farmers have already paid off these loans after 10 years, although they had 40 years to run. Incidentally, it is interesting to observe that some Negro farm loans are now being financed by the North Carolina Negro insurance company which I mentioned a moment ago.

The successful enterprise of one colored farmer right here in Sumter county is worthy of note. Many of you probably know him. In 1939 he borrowed money to buy the farm on which he had lived for 14 years as a sharecropper. By 1945, he had a net worth of $15,475. He has purchased a tractor, has built a home for one of his sons out of net cash income, his own family lives in an attractive house, and he has money in the bank to operate next year.

The Farmers Home Administration has made 87 other such loans in Sumter county. Of these, 14 have been paid in full, and 36 others are paying their debt well ahead of schedule.

In 1930 there were only 20 Negro county agents. Today there are 62 — 30 farm demonstration agents and 32 home demonstration agents. Practically all of these are graduates of our own State College at Orangeburg.

Tom Campbell, Southern field agent for the Negro Extension Service, said in his 1948 report: "I predict that an emancipation of a new kind is coming very soon for the Negro farmer of the South. He is learning how to diversify his crops, to market his produce more advantageously, to raise livestock more profitable, to improve and beautify his home, and most important of all, to educate his children."

In 1948 we had 4,175 Negro youths enrolled in our State vocational agricultural courses, with 115 different departments. Fifteen years ago there were only 2,322 colored agriculture students and 74 departments.
In 1933 we had 1,388 colored farmers taking agricultural courses offered Negro adults. Today we have about 6,500. As a result of the GI program, we are also training 5,664 veterans in our on-the-farm program, with 569 teachers. This means that South Carolina today has approximately 16,300 Negroes taking training to make efficient and prosperous farmers, as compared with about 3,700 15 years ago.

Great success has attended our efforts to eliminate illiteracy in adult education classes for colored. Today we have 331 such classes, teaching approximately 5,000 men and women. The "three R's" are taught, good citizenship is emphasized, and a higher standard of living is upheld as the ultimate goal. This teaching plan is a practical one, stressing letter-writing, newspaper reading, thrift and savings, and conservation of food. As part of the program, Negro history week was celebrated last year in community meetings which attracted nearly 100,000 persons.

Colored veterans in large numbers have enrolled in special classes, organized in the public schools, to give them the kind of training they need and want. In addition, Area Trade Schools have recently been established, which train not only veterans but other young men and women over 17 years of age who desire to learn skilled trades that will make them productive citizens.

The number of colored children completing high school in this State has increased remarkably. In 1933, only 165 Negro students were graduated. In 1947, the total had grown to 2,340. In 1933, there were only 8 standard accredited Negro high schools in South Carolina. Today there are 66, and we now have a total of 165 high schools for colored. The number of elementary schools now totals 2,132.

There are four privately endowed senior colleges and three junior colleges for Negroes in our State. The State maintains a senior college, with a graduate school and a recently established law school. Total enrollment in these institutions in 1946 was more than 3,000.

Each year our State Legislature appropriates a fund for scholarships for Negroes wishing to study medicine and pharmacy, administered under
regulations of the Board of Trustees of the state Negro college. The 1948 Legislature set aside $10,000 for these scholarships.

In elementary education steady progress is being attained. Our nine-months' school term is now a permanent law, and the number of elementary school days attended by the average pupil has increased from 113 in 1933 to about 170 today. We have reduced our one-teacher Negro schools from 1,212 in 1933 to 842 today.

Other phases of Negro education show similar progress. Today bus transportation is furnished for nearly 4,000 colored children, as compared with only 87 transported in 1933. In that period, the value of Negro school property has doubled. The number of school libraries increased from 209 to 597, and the number of circulating library visits increased from 59 to 363.

Negro teacher salaries were equalized with those of white teachers three years ago. Certificates are based on training, experience, and examination, with equal state aid for those with equal qualifications. In 1933 the average Negro teacher's salary in South Carolina was only $266. Today, the average colored elementary teacher receives $1,117 and the average colored high school teacher receives $1,611. To understand the significance of these salaries, one must compare them with the average per capita income of the State, white and colored, which is only $778 a year.

In the field of health, we have come a long way within a short period. The best illustration of this fact is in the reduction of the Negro mortality rates in this State. The latest available figures show that we had a Negro death rate in 1946 of 9.3 per 1,000 population. It is the lowest in the South, and it is lower than the rate of 16 per 1,000 for the New England States, and lower than the rate of 14.1 per 1,000 in the Middle Atlantic States.

The colored infant death rate has also been strikingly reduced. In 1946 infant deaths were 51 per 1,000. This was 10 points lower than the national average. Our accomplishment becomes even more significant when you realize that the Negro infant death rate for the U.S. in 1920 was 135.6.

A determined effort is being made by our State Health Department to
bring about further reduction in infant deaths and improve the children's health, by conducting pre-natal clinics and by visits from the public health nurses. Approximately 28,000 colored women attended the pre-natal clinics during 1947. The majority of such mothers are being attended by midwives, and the State is therefore carrying on an intensive training and certification program for its approximately 1,500 midwives. This includes illiteracy training as part of the adult education program of the Department of Education.

Longevity among Negroes has increased tremendously. In 1900 the "expectancy of life" for colored males was only about 32 years. In 1944 they could expect to live an average of 55 years.

In South Carolina, and in the South as a whole, racial relations have steadily improved. They will improve even more rapidly as our economic conditions improve. The Southern Negro has become a home owner, a tax payer, and a more dependable citizen. He is rising by his own worth, and he knows that only in this way will his progress be sound and enduring.

It is my firm conviction, and I believe it is the conviction of the vast majority of the people of this State, that our colored citizens can and will achieve economic prosperity and a better life under our existing laws and traditions. While much progress has been made, much more remains to be accomplished. But the trend shown by the facts which I have briefly reviewed indicates beyond doubt that the full job will be completed in the years which lie just ahead.

It is my duty and determination as Governor to see that, as citizens of this State, our Negroes are given fair treatment; that their rights are protected; that they can apply their legitimate trades or professions unmolested; and that they have the chance to achieve the opportunities to which their ability, ambition, initiative, and energy entitle them.

Let us all recognize the fact that we are faced with one of the greatest sociological problems in the history of mankind. It is not a matter of prejudice, but one which has recurred from time to time throughout the history of mankind. The South's achievement in the solution of this problem has been recognized by many leading Americans. I recall especially the statement of the
late Senator William E. Borah, a great liberal Republican, and a great humanitarian. Senator Borah told the United States Senate in 1938, that "the Southern people have met the race problem and dealt with it with greater patience, greater tolerance, greater intelligence, and greater success than any people in recorded history, dealing with a problem of similar nature." Let us remember that in a free America, race and sectional hatred have no proper place. Let us work together to the end that we shall eliminate it as an obstacle to our mutual progress.

A better day is coming for the South. It is coming so rapidly that our adjustments must be made with our best care and attention. It will come more surely if there is continued good will between the races.

In closing, I would like to read some passages from a letter written by a well-known Negro educator from the lower part of our State, the principal of a high school in this State:

"The Negro is part of the panorama of awakening of an entire region which formerly suffered from widespread poverty and lack of opportunity. Today a new vigor is sensed everywhere, and the Negro rejoices that he is a part of this great development, in which he can share the satisfaction of seeing the land yield the products from the fertility of the soil; industry turn out machines and merchandise for use in all parts of the world, and a closely knit transportation, which daily brings products of the country to the South, and takes from the South those things which may be exchanged for wealth,

"The Negro has had a hand in the changes which have come about, and through the work offered him, he has elevated himself not only in the respect of his fellow-men, but as a fulfillment of his desire for more education, a better understanding of the religious significance of life, and a chance to participate in cultural attainments which will raise his perspective.

"On this high plane of mutual interest in the progress and welfare of a vast region of our country, and prosperous conditions which open the door of opportunity to all, a better understanding based on tolerance has been fostered between the two races which predominate in the South."
This Negro educator concludes: "The Negro has made more real progress in the South than in any other section of the country."

This is my belief, and I think it is yours.

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