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Address at Junior-Senior Banquet, Newberry College

Strom Thurmond

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I am always glad of the opportunity to address a group of college men and women, because such an audience is so closely associated with one of my favorite topics — that of the economic future of South Carolina. I believe in that future — I think it will be a great one — but I realize that the measure of our success will depend upon our young people.

That is why I have chosen to discuss with you briefly tonight some of the aspects of our State's future, and some of the changes that are taking place today to affect it. I think you will find it worthwhile to evaluate these changes in relation to your future careers — whether you plan to enter one of the professions, to go into business, or to earn your living in agriculture or industry. And when you have studied economic trends in South Carolina, even briefly, I think you will agree that changes now taking place are little short of revolutionary in scope.

For two centuries, South Carolina has been dominated by an agricultural economy. Even today we are
accustomed to hearing it said that our State is "primarily agricultural." But during the past few years, a rapid transformation has been going forward which has required tremendous adjustments. This transition has been so greatly accelerated in the past few years that it has been difficult to keep up with it. South Carolina is becoming industrialized so rapidly that we are attracting the attention of the entire nation.

Anyone who believes that we are only an agricultural State should look more closely at the figures. In 1920, more than 1,000,000 persons lived on farms in South Carolina. By 1945, that number had dropped to about 680,000 a decrease of 36 per cent. While about 64 per cent of our people lived on farms after World War I, only 36 per cent were living on farms after World War II. And there is every reason to believe that the 1950 census will show an even greater loss of farm population.

This trend has been due almost entirely to the growing use of electricity and machinery on the farm. The progress of mechanization on our farms is clearly shown by comparing the decrease in the number of work animals with the corresponding increase in the number of tractors. Horses
and mules on South Carolina farms decreased 41 per cent from 1920 to 1948, while the number of tractors increased 17 times. Other types of farm machinery have increased in like proportion.

As farmers turn to machinery for profitable cultivation, their children must leave the farm and go into industry or other employment to make a living. Experts now estimate that in the coming decade, two out of three children born on the farm must leave it to find jobs.

A few years ago, such a trend would have been enough to alarm anyone who is concerned with the welfare of the State. Today, there is little cause for alarm. The likelihood is that plenty of jobs will be available for the multitudes leaving the farm. The solution is -- new industry.

No doubt you have read something in the newspapers about our progress in industrial development. The facts are amazing to contemplate. Our growth in industry has been so rapid that various public officials in the North and East have complained bitterly in vain attempts to stop us. One of them whined that we are "kidnapping" industries. Another offered to help raise a half-million dollar slush fund to threaten industry away from our doors, claiming that we had "slave labor" and sweat shop conditions.
We are "kidnapping" nobody, and we most certainly are not holding out the inducement of cheap labor in an attempt to attract anybody. On the contrary, we are determined to invite into our State only those industries which can afford to provide wholesome working conditions and to pay adequate wages.

The northeastern governor who recently spoke of the so-called "sweat-shop" conditions in the South was simply not acquainted with the facts. The truth is that the average South Carolina working man, living in an industrial community, is better housed, better clothed, and has a better income than his northern neighbors. In our largest industry, that of textiles, the average wage is $1.11 an hour, and that income is usually augmented by company benefits as well as by cheaper living costs than are to be found in the North and East.

No, we are not offering them cheap labor. I do not believe in cheap labor. But we are showing industries the many natural advantages our State has to offer. We are doing it in a business-like way, through our Research, Planning & Development Department. By supplying accurate data on any
subject desired, by attractive advertising displays, and by personal solicitation and assistance, we are calling the attention of industry to the great potentialities of our State. Such large concerns as DuPont, Celanese, Deering-Milliken, Textron, J. P. Stevens, and many others have launched or scheduled South Carolina plants.

South Carolina can offer many advantages to industries seeking new locations.

First, there is our mild and healthful climate, which makes for better working efficiency, and which greatly reduces the problem of heating with which industry is plagued in other sections. We enjoy a good distribution of rainfall throughout the year, without a wet or a dry season to hamper operations.

Second, we have a plentiful supply of labor, usually coming from the farms or from rural communities. These people are the finest stock on earth, almost entirely native-born. They are friendly, courteous, and hard-working. And they are great producers. In fact, the president of one great textile concern has said that they produce an average of 10 per cent more goods than workers in other areas.
Third, we can offer industry a favorable tax structure, one that is designed to encourage industry rather than to tax it out of existence.

Fourth, we have an abundant variety of raw materials from which industry can be assured of a steady supply. We have great forests available for the manufacture of furniture and other products; kaolin for making brick and other ceramics products; sand for the manufacture of glass. We produce quantities of tobacco that could be manufactured into cigars and cigarettes here and then shipped elsewhere. There is only one cigar factory in the State today and no cigarette factories. We grow thousands of bales of cotton and I am glad that more of this raw product is now being manufactured into finished goods in our own State. We produce hundreds of tons of cotton seed from which oils, paints and food products can be manufactured. We are now raising more livestock than ever before in the history of the State but we have a market for more beef cattle and dairy products. Many other types of industry would thrive on the raw materials and products available in South Carolina.

Fifth, we are engaged in a large-scale seaport development program which offers industry the water transportation
so many industries need. Our Port of Charleston has now
become one of the leading Atlantic seaports, and the ports
at Georgetown and Beaufort will soon be serving their sections
handsomely. Incidentally, the Charleston Port handled nearly
$45,000,000 in exports last year, and this was more than
double its exports in 1946. If you have not seen this seaport,
it will be well worth your while to visit it. It is difficult
to estimate the importance of a good seaport development
program. To give you an idea -- I am told that the three
States of North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia buy
$46,000,000 worth of wool a year. This wool is shipped from
Australia and New Zealand to Boston and then sent South by
freight. If it were shipped directly to Charleston, however,
the wool manufacturers could save a total of over $300,000 a
year.

A sixth inducement we can offer industry is an
abundant supply of public and private power. Looking to the
future, one can see a vast expansion of power opening up great
new possibilities for industrial development. The tremendous
Clark Hill development alone will cause our Savannah River
valley to blossom like the rose. In addition, South Carolina
Power Company has three new plants planned or under construction, and Duke Power Company is building two new plants. And we already have the big Santee-Cooper public power project. Nothing is more important to industrial development than ample power.

A seventh inducement to industrial expansion is the almost universal cooperative attitude on the part of our citizens. This is more important than you might think. Industrial executives and their employees have the natural desire of all people everywhere to be received as friends, and to be given friendly, courteous treatment. They are finding a royal welcome in South Carolina, and they are being given the right hand of friendship and assistance wherever they turn.

The eighth important inducement we can offer is that of a sound, stable, and progressive government. This, too, is a consideration of some weight with industry. When an investment of as much as $45,000,000 is to be risked, capital must be assured that the State Government is being run on a business-like basis, with the same honesty and efficiency that characterizes industry itself. We are demonstrating to the world that South Carolina's government is one of the soundest in the country. Our government reorganization program, now being studied by a special commission, has a direct appeal to industry.
All these factors have brought about a spectacular increase in our industrial potential in the last few years. Since World War II, the amazing sum of $423,000,000 has been invested or earmarked for investment in South Carolina in new industries or expansions. During the last two years alone, more than $252,000,000 in new industry either began construction, began operation, or was announced for construction. More than 20,000 new jobs have been created in the last two years, with many thousands more to come.

It may surprise you to learn that South Carolina is now producing nearly two billion dollars worth of industrial products a year. At the same time, industrial wages have also been increasing. The average wages paid by our industry in 1946 was $1,477. In 1948 it reached $2,026. You can understand the importance of industrial development when you compare this average of $2,026 with that of our average per capita income, which is only $778 a year.

Along agricultural lines, we must endeavor to keep pace with our industrial program in order to achieve a properly balanced economy. Although our per capita farm income has increased from $126 a year in 1946 to $604 in 1948, we
still do not have the farm income that we should and can have.

By encouraging increased use of machinery, proper soil conservation, diversification of crops and other modern farming methods, we can assure our State of an agricultural income second to none in the nation.

We must also continue to seek improvements in transportation facilities, in public health, and in education, if we are to realize our economic possibilities to the fullest. In educational endeavors we must continue to find ways to train our people to fill the jobs created by industry. We have made a good start with the Area Trade School system, inaugurated in 1947. In these schools, workers may receive training in machine shop work, electricity, cabinet making, carpentry, diesel engines, cosmetology, auto mechanics, auto body and fender repair, air conditioning, refrigeration, radio, barbering, and watch repair. At the same time, our colleges are training those who will provide the leadership in our economic future.

South Carolina's ability to play an important role in the economic development of the nation will depend to a large extent on the quality of her leaders. We must be able to count on a full measure of leadership from our educated young people. The qualities of leadership in Southern men and women have always been strong, but too often those qualities have been

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used in other sections of the country. In past years, there has been a heavy drain on our resources because so many young men and women sought opportunities elsewhere.

I do not believe such will be the case in the next few years. I believe our young people of today have the vision and the imagination to see what is in store for South Carolina, and I believe the vast majority of them will choose to make their homes and build their careers here among their own people.

The great traditions of fine culture which have distinguished South Carolina for two centuries are great inspirations to us today. Every South Carolinian has a right to be proud of his cultural heritage, and of the history of gracious living which has characterized our State.

But in planning our future, we must make certain that our cultural background is supported by an economic structure that is stable, progressive, and prosperous. We must find the means to raise the living standards of our people, to a level more nearly approaching that of the nation as a whole. If we can accomplish that, many of our most vexing problems will fall by the wayside.
I, for one, am full of faith and confidence for the future. I believe in South Carolina. I believe in her people. I am convinced that we are waking up to our opportunities, and that we are on the road to economic prosperity and to greater happiness for all our people.

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