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Reply to press about intentions to not attend a dinner at which Vice President Barkley would speak

Strom Thurmond

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STATEMENT BY J. STROM THURMOND, GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA, IN REPLY TO PRESS QUERY AS TO WHETHER HE WOULD ATTEND DINNER AT WHICH VICE PRESIDENT BARKLEY WILL SPEAK JULY 1.

I am sure the Vice President will receive a gracious welcome when he visits Columbia. The people of South Carolina respect the office of Vice President, and we always welcome to our State those who occupy high positions of trust.

Last year, the Democratic Party of South Carolina adopted its platform and principles in opposition to the Truman Civil Rights Program, and pledged the Party's Presidential and Vice Presidential electors against those who advocated that program.

The overwhelming majority of the Democrats of South Carolina approved and stood by our Party's platform and principles in the November election.

A small number of politicians deserted the Democratic Party of South Carolina, and for reasons of their own supported the Truman ticket. Some of them have accepted appointments from Washington as State officials of our party, and have tried to oust our party officials elected by the Democrats of South Carolina.

Under directions from Washington, they hope to take over our Party, compromise its principles, and purge those who remained loyal to its platform. They are trying to obscure the fact that they fought the Democratic Party of South Carolina at the polls. They are now trying to raise money to continue this fight against our party.

It is regrettable that Mr. Barkley comes to our State, not as Vice President to visit the people of South Carolina, but in his capacity as a politician, to assist these bolters in their efforts to destroy our party. He is coming to speak to those who pay $15 a plate to attend a political dinner, which money no doubt will go to Washington to promote the Truman Civil Rights Program.
These pro-Truman Democrats of South Carolina claim that they are trying to bring about harmony in the State Democratic Party. If they will prevail upon Mr. Barkley in his speech in Columbia to renounce the Truman Civil Rights Program and pledge his cooperation to Southern Congressmen in their fight against those unconstitutional measures, then a long step will have been made toward restoring harmony in the Democratic Party.

Of course, we all know this is impossible. The Vice President, just as much as the President, is pledged to this program to humiliate and punish South Carolina and the South as a means of repaying minority blocs in other States for their votes.

Although they claim to be opposed to the Civil Rights Program, these pro-Truman Democrats in South Carolina, in selecting the spokesman for their $15 a plate dinner, have selected the man who, if he had had his way, would have already enacted the whole program into law at the present session of Congress. Mr. Barkley was even willing to abolish the historic tradition of unlimited debate in the United States Senate by a precedent-breaking ruling, as presiding officer, which would have brought about gag rule. Fortunately, the Senate overruled the Barkley decision, and the Civil Rights Program has not been enacted.

There have been other Barkley dinners in Southern States, engineered, I am told, by a man named Boyle, a Pendergast machine politician, who is now running the Democratic National Committee in Washington, and using the patronage of the Federal Government in an effort to browbeat Southern Congressmen into going along with the Civil Rights Program. Those who have helped arrange this dinner may have high hopes of Federal patronage and favors for themselves, but they will find that the people of South Carolina will not be browbeaten by Federal threats.

The fight which our people made last year was a fight for principles. It was a fight for South Carolina Democracy.

There may be those, guided by political expediency, who will compromise, but there can be no compromise of principles.

I could not attend the dinner without being untrue to the people
of South Carolina who showed that they have the courage to stand for what they believe in.

I shall not attend the dinner.