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Concerning Tobacco Referendum

Strom Thurmond

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ADDRESS BY J. STROM THURMOND, GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA, ON WIRE RECORDING TO BE USED FOR RADIO BROADCASTS IN FEE DEE SECTION CONCERNING TOBACCO REFERENDUM TO BE HELD ON JULY 23, 1949.

Saturday, July 23, is "red letter day" on the farm calendar of South Carolina Flue-cured tobacco growers.

On that day, growers will vote to decide whether they want to continue marketing quotas for one year, for three years or not at all. They will also decide whether they want to continue payment of ten cents an acre to support Tobacco Associates, Inc.

I am sure the tobacco farmers favor their profitable program, but there is some doubt that all growers realize the importance of a big vote. It is more important now than ever before that tobacco growers show Congress, through a large vote, that they are pleased with the present tobacco program and desire to leave this program essentially the same. It is important to show Congress this, in view of the innumerable suggested changes in agriculture commodity programs. The present tobacco program is the envy of almost every other commodity group, and unless enthusiasm and satisfaction is signaled to Congress by a big vote, in the July 23rd tobacco referendum, it is possible that we would go back to ten cents tobacco. You may well measure the results of your votes in terms of dollars and cents from the sale of your tobacco in future years.

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The tobacco program is generally considered to be an outstanding example of the kind of farm commodity program in which production is adjusted to consumption, high level support prices are maintained at no public expense and growers have and exercise their right to control the program. If quotas are approved, I am informed that individual farm acreage allotments for 1950 will be about the same as the 1949 allotment.

If the supply and demand situations warrant, the Secretary of Agriculture can increase allotments any time up to March 1st by twenty percent. If the quotas are approved, price support loans at ninety percent of the parity price will be continued. Under the law, price support loans at this high level will be available on the 1950 crop of Flue-cured tobacco through the stabilization corporation, if the producers approve quotas in this referendum. You should bear in mind, however, that regardless of the outcome of this referendum, price support loans at ninety percent of parity will be available on the 1949 crop as a protection to farmers. I should like to emphasize to you that the long range program affords growers the opportunity of obtaining loans based on grades. Loans furnish a protection that eliminates some of the price risks from tobacco grown. Realize, too, that ninety percent of parity loans will not be available without quotas.
Right after the war, it seemed for a while that Flue-cured tobacco farmers were to become "forgotten men" in the post-war turmoil of foreign and governmental trade circles. Realizing that the export market of their "golden weed" meant much to them, their families, and the entire economy of their states, they decided to do something about the situation...to do something to help themselves.

Their efforts, joined by allied groups, resulted in the organization of Tobacco Associates for the sole purpose of holding, developing and expanding the export of American grown tobacco. Through concerted efforts of tobacco farmers, working through Tobacco Associates, tobacco was included in the Marshall plan. By the same means, some seventy million pounds of American grown tobacco have been scheduled for export to Germany, a new market for United States tobacco. Last year, the export market meant over twenty-six million dollars to South Carolina Flue-cured tobacco growers. This means that the average tobacco grower in South Carolina got approximately $240.00 an acre as the result of the export market.

The tobacco program, consisting of marketing quotas to adjust supply to demand, the Stabilization Corporation to implement the support price, and Tobacco Associates to expand
export markets, is a three legged stool upon which the successful operation of the tobacco industry operates. Removing either of these legs will cause the stool to topple over. That is why it is your duty, your responsibility, to vote and get others to vote in this all important referendum on July 23. Let's not let the best program of any agricultural commodity slip through our fingers by failing to go to the polls on July 23rd, and stand behind a program which has meant so much to us, our families, our communities and our State.

Having been reared on a farm, I have always been deeply interested in farming and the welfare of our farmers. I do hope that the tobacco farmers will vote in the approaching referendum and support the tobacco program designed for their welfare.