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Address to state convention of the United Daughters of the Confederacy

Strom Thurmond

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MADAM PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

It is gratifying to me to have a part in the annual convention of South Carolina's Daughters of the Confederacy. Every true South Carolinian admires the ideals and the achievements of your great organization, and the loyalty and devotion of your membership has been an inspiration to those who love the undying principles of the Confederacy.

Time has long since healed the wounds of those tragic years of 1861-65, and we are united today in unswerving loyalty to the flag of the greatest nation on earth. The United Daughters of the Confederacy has made a large contribution to welding the ties of mutual devotion which now bind us all in unity. Its high principles and its devoted service to deathless ideals have helped to soften the bitterness of other days.

From the time of its first convention in Tennessee in 1894, and its later merger with so many of those women's organizations which served so nobly during the war, the U. D. C. has turned our hearts away from the animosities of the war, and toward the heroic ideals in which all men may unite. By perpetuating
those ideals, the U. D. C. has rendered an immortal service to our country.

The most moving ideal that inspired the men and women of the Confederacy was the deep desire of all Americans for freedom. It is this desire which is at the root of the patriotism all Americans feel.

Let us think together for a few minutes tonight about the most important matter in the world today -- the course of human freedom. As a matter of practical application, let us try to determine, as well as we can, how this subject affects us individually and as South Carolinians.

The question of the world's progress in human freedom is vast. Once we have acquired something like a grasp of the subject, we are compelled to admit that the issue touches every citizen of our State.

The rights of free men are in jeopardy throughout the world today. Their inherent right to the pursuit of happiness is being tested in every corner of the globe. Human freedom today stands at a critical point in history. Decisions made within our lifetimes will probably determine whether citizens
of the United States will preserve the liberty passed on to us
to preserve, or whether we shall suffer a new kind of tyranny
and oppression.

We are now but a few years removed from a terrible
war which was fought to crush that kind of tyranny. The forces
of democracy and of human liberty won that war. We are not
now deluding ourselves into thinking that the struggle is over.
A new menace is on the horizon, and apparently drawing nearer
every day. I refer, of course, to the spread of the influence
of Communist.

On the other hand, the most important influence
now being brought to bear on the progress of freedom is that
of the United States of America. The central point in international
progress is Washington, not Moscow.

It has been truly said that the eyes of suffering
men the world over are fixed on Washington at this moment. Every
intelligent citizen in every nation of the world is anxiously
watching the American people. They are watching us, not for the
latest fashions, not for the latest inventions, and not, in the
final analysis, to see how many dollars we will give away. Instead,
they are watching something deeper, something more important than material things. They are waiting to see whether the system of democratic government developed by Americans can stand the test of the pressure caused by our new position of world leadership. The world knows that if our system fails, there is no longer any hope.

There is no other nation to which men may turn for the protection of democratic principles. The British Empire, once the most powerful union on earth, is almost bankrupt, its great power hanging in the balance. Like all other men, the British, too, must turn to America with hopeful eyes.

We, as Americans -- as South Carolinians -- are therefore faced with the greatest challenge ever to confront us. We are the leading nation on earth, and we cannot escape the responsibilities thus piled upon us. The American spirit is going to be tested in the years to come as never before. The world has now come to believe that our system of democratic government is the best there is.

To meet the challenge, we cannot depend alone upon the strength of our military machine. The atom bomb, as we have recently seen, is not, unfortunately, a monopoly of the
United States. However, the atom bomb in itself was never enough, anyway. We should be foolish to rely entirely upon such a weapon, and let other important matters go by the board.

Internal security is far more important to our nation than the atom bomb. We must have a strong and vigorous people first, and a powerful military machine second. It was not American arms only that tipped the balance toward victory in World War II -- but also American production -- the unbelievably vast amount of goods produced by the American people. Without that, our soldiers and those of our allies would have been helpless, despite their courage.

The factors that made such production possible may be found in the American belief in free enterprise and democratic government. The goods for World War II were produced by free men, working on their own initiative, at tasks they chose themselves. You could not have driven Americans to do such a job. They did it because of an inner belief in themselves, and because of a devotion to the democratic way of life.

It follows that if Americans are to fulfill their new role of world leadership for democracy, we are going to have to strengthen and renew the qualities within us which have made
us what we are today. The free enterprise system and the
political way must be made to work better than ever before.

This challenge should appeal to every American.
It should bolster his courage; and his faith in himself. It
should cause him to go about his daily affairs with a new
mission, a new and more important task to think about.

Nevertheless, all about us we can see danger
signals telling us that all is not well with the American people
today. The American spirit of free enterprise and individual
liberty is undergoing a dangerous assault. Our system of
democratic government is being attacked from within, in such
a way as to weaken it at the core.

I want to mention briefly three important danger
signals which must be recognized and faced if we are to play
the role in world affairs which we have assumed. These dangers
are: a lessening of the will to work, a lessening of civic
responsibility, and a lessening of financial stability.

All three of these signals are symptoms, rather
than causes, of our national troubles. They are indications of
the spread of philosophies which are foreign in origin, and alien
to the American system. They are the outward signs of a cancerous
growth which has been attacking our society for many years, and with especial rapidity in the past few years.

The American will to work is one of our most important national characteristics. We have been hard and willing workers since the days when the early Americans faced many difficult obstacles in carving out a civilization on a new continent. We have always gone about our daily tasks eagerly, and with great energy and interest. As a result, our ability to produce material wealth has become, perhaps, our most outstanding trait.

There are indications today that this national trait is in danger of losing some of its strength and vigor. We seldom ever hear the virtues of hard work preached any more. Instead, our young people are being taught ways and means of doing less and less work all the time. Today in many places it is more popular to ask, "What's in it for me?" rather than to ask, "Can I do the job?"

This kind of indifferent philosophy is spreading among us at a time when we face the problem of building up a production of such quantity that it will serve to bolster many weaker nations in many parts of the world. American goods are
needed now almost as severely as they were in World War II. Americans should not be led astray by those who urge them to concentrate their talents on producing less rather than on producing more.

The second danger signal is equally threatening. Our national life is being endangered by a weakening of our sense of civic responsibility. The privileges of the citizen are often mentioned, but his duties almost never.

Many of us are inclined to forget that our democracy is based upon an alert citizenship exercising its responsibilities first on the local level, then on the state level, and finally on the national level. Good local government has brought about good state government, and good state government has resulted in good national government.

But today it has grown fashionable to look to Washington to solve all our civic troubles. The citizen is turning more and more toward the national government, and forgetting his local and state responsibilities. He is learning to depend on federal laws as the answer to every problem. Instead of making an attempt to exercise control over his own government, he is permitting himself to be controlled by that government.
Most of our citizens today do not even bother to go to the polls and vote in local matters. And in the last national election, less than one-sixth of the people elected a President. Who can say whether the other five-sixths of our population were in accord? Whether they were or not, they are being governed today by an administration which was put in power by the other one-sixth.

Too many Americans forget that civic duty always goes hand in hand with civic privilege in a democracy. One cannot exist without the other. To be slack in the duties of the citizen is to weaken the privileges of a citizen.

The third great signal of danger in our national life is a breaking down of financial stability. We now have a national debt larger than any nation ever had in the history of the world. And yet we are being asked to spend more and more money, and to build a more expensive governmental pyramid every year.

No doubt you have read that the Government now intends to proceed on the basis of what is known as "deficit financing." These are weasel words which mean simply that Uncle Sam does not intend to live within his income, that he
plans to spend more than he can afford, and that he will do
it by going in the red more and more.

In the last two decades the federal budget
has jumped 10 times over, from $4 billion to $40 billion.
Yet this year the Congress was asked to make that budget even
bigger, although the money was not in sight.

In spite of the fact that we are the world's
richest nation and spending more than our government collects,
we are being asked to spend even more -- and sums so huge that
they stagger the imagination.

This is financial irresponsibility of the worst
sort. It would bring any private citizen and any private
business to grief, and it will bring our Government to grief
in the end.

The three danger signs I have listed all accompany
the effort to build up the powers of the national government by
encroaching upon the rights and sovereignty of the states and of
the citizen. Americans are learning to depend more and more
upon Washington for security, rather than upon individual
initiative. The net result is a concentration of power in the
federal government never dreamed of by our founding fathers.
Tonight we are participating in a historical program. It will pay us to review the thinking of the early Americans who made history as men had never done before when they laid the foundation for our country.

Thomas Jefferson and his contemporaries declared that the true and democratic function of government is to use its power to distribute freedom equally among all citizens. In a democracy, they said, freedom is the ability to do what you want to do, so long as you do not harm anyone else. The power of government was defined by them as a means of insuring the citizen that he can live his own life without interference from someone else. He was prevented from harming his neighbor, but in turn he was protected from violence inflicted upon himself.

But today in Washington there are many persons in high places who laugh at such a theory. They hold that the function of government is to interfere, to regulate, and to control. They go far beyond the necessary controls against monopolistic practices and the like which are needed in an economy so vast as ours. They go far beyond the desirable assistance which the government can render to the people.
They sponsor laws such as the Spence Bill, which would give the President power over the people no monarch ever had. They demand unconstitutional laws such as the so-called civil rights program, which would reach down and control the very goings and comings of the citizen himself, and set precedents for Federal regimentation never dreamed by our people or contemplated by our Constitution.

It is time for Americans to realize that when a new power is given to the central government, the citizen gives up the power. We must recognize that the control of government must be kept close to home, if the people are to remain in control. The more distant and remote a government is, the more difficult it is to make it reflect the wishes of the people. A citizen can always make his influence felt on his local or his state government. But it is difficult indeed for him to make his voice heard in Washington.

You have heard much lately about States' Rights. This great principle was inserted into our Constitution by the early Americans in order to keep the power of government close to the people. Most of the powers of government were reserved by this principle to the states, where the people had the control.
That is why many Americans today are defending the principle of States' Rights. It is the only way we have of keeping the federal government from taking over all the powers of the people.

Here in South Carolina we know what our problems are. We are facing them with greater determination than ever before. We are bringing in new industries and building up our agriculture, so that our people will have more money to educate their children and keep their families healthy. The welfare of our working people and our farmers should always be the concern of our leaders. We are recognizing this fact in South Carolina, and we have done a lot about it, too, in the past few years. We've trebled our average farm income in the past 10 years, and more than trebled the income of our citizens generally. Our expenditures for education, health, and other essential state services have increased to meet the need. We're going on to still greater achievements in the years to come.

But the work we are doing is being threatened from outside our borders. If the trend in Washington is not stopped, it will destroy our people's incentive for accomplishment, and their will to work. It will drain off our profits to pay for administrative costs over which we have no control. It will
weaken and perhaps destroy the great free enterprise system
which is today making South Carolina's progress possible.

If the course of events in Washington is not
changed, the United States will be made over into a socialistic
state. The free enterprise system cannot exist in a socialist
state. There can be one or the other, but not both. If we are
to have socialism, we must throw free enterprise and individual
initiative out of the window. The sooner Americans realize this
fact, the better.

Our progress in South Carolina is completely
dependent on the energy, enterprise, skill and hard work of our
people. It depends on an alert citizenry, anxious to meet its
responsibilities wherever they arise. And it depends on a sound
financial condition, without which we cannot create the jobs our
people need.

All three of these needs of South Carolina are being
threatened by the drift toward a socialistic government in
Washington. That is how the trend of things is affecting us here
in our own state.

But let's look beyond our borders, and catch a
vision of the effect of this trend on people all over the world.
Let us imagine its effects upon the average European, for instance, who is closely watching developments in the United States. He is hoping against hope that the great bulwark of American democracy will be sufficient to protect him against the inroads of Communism, and against another war.

One cannot believe that the average European can take much comfort from the fact that America is going the old, old way of Europe, where socialism has existed in one form or another for centuries. One cannot imagine him taking comfort from our drift toward a form of government which has brought England to bankruptcy.

This average European thinks of Americans as a hard-working, independent, free people who have built the greatest and richest nation on earth. It must be hard for him to understand why so many of us are listening to voices which would weaken our enterprise and our spirit, and make us throw away the qualities that made us great.

And he must know, too, that the kind of human freedom which the common people of Europe have sought in vain may some day disappear even in America. He must realize that we are rapidly giving up the historical guarantees of human freedom.
which were laid down by our founding fathers, in the greatest act of political genius ever known to man.

Perhaps it is a dark picture for the European, and certainly it should be a dark one for us. But if we could speak to him now, I believe we could inspire him with a faith in the future of America which would carry him out of despair. I believe we would say to him that Americans are made of solid stuff, that the American spirit is so splendidly made that it will not lightly pass away.

I think we could say to that European that the American people are growing alert to the dangers that surround them so closely now; and that the deep faith in democracy we inherited from our fathers will not be scattered to the winds of socialism and tyranny.

That is my faith. I believe that the course of human freedom runs deeply in America -- so deeply that it shall flow on and on in an ever-increasing river, whose great channel shall never be diverted onto the desert wastes of human misery and human degredation.