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Address at Dedication of Walter Andrews Memorial Bridge, Georgetown County

Strom Thurmond

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FELLOW SOUTH CAROLINIANS:

Every one of us gathered here today should be proud to take part in the dedication of the beautiful new Walter H. Andrews Memorial Bridge across the famous old Santee River. The ceremony here today will mark not only the provision of a new convenience for the people of this section, but a new forward step in South Carolina's upward march toward economic prosperity.

Because it provides a better means of communication between Georgetown and Berkeley counties, the Walter Andrews Bridge is the realization of a long-standing dream. For many years the citizens of these counties have worked and planned toward the day when this bridge could be dedicated. Today, every citizen who shared in this project may feel a just pride in his accomplishment. South Carolina owes a debt of gratitude to the community and county leaders who cooperated through the years to make this bridge possible.

Walter H. Andrews was one of those who had the vision to recognize the great need for such a bridge across State Route 511, connecting the communities of Andrews and Jamestown, and all the surrounding counties. Mr. Andrews was a builder, a man who worked always for the future. He could envision a greater economic
prosperity for the lower part of South Carolina, and he knew
that a crossing here on the Santee was a necessary and vital step
if that prosperity was to be realized. Mr. Andrews worked for
the establishment of a ferry across the river, and he undoubtedly
realized that it would one day be replaced by a bridge.

It is fitting that we should recognize Mr. Andrews' contribution to the building of our State by naming this great new bridge for him. As a highway commissioner, a forestry commissioner, and as a county and community leader, he served South Carolina with distinction.

The Andrews Bridge may well become a source of pride to every citizen of the State. It was built of the latest and most modern design, at a cost of more than $1,000,000. We may be especially proud of the fact that it is one of four bridges costing one million dollars each to be completed in this State during the last few months. The Society Hill, Mars Bluff, and Fort Motte bridges were also badly needed.

Such projects as these are part of our long-range program of economic development which will one day place South Carolina in the front rank of prosperous states. The development of every section of the State is accelerated when more rapid means of communication is provided.
The subject of economic improvement in South Carolina is one that should demand the attention and hold the interest of every forward-looking citizen. Let us consider today some of the more important phases of our great program of progress, so that we may leave no stone unturned in our effort to raise the economic level of our people.

Perhaps the most noteworthy phase of our progress in recent years has been in the field of industrial development. A mere glance at the figures will open the eyes of anyone who doubts that South Carolina has a great future in store. The new industry coming into our State, and the expansion of existing industry, has focused the eyes of the entire nation on South Carolina.

Our development in this field since World War II has been almost beyond the imagination. During the last two years alone, more than $252,000,000 in new industry either began construction, began operation, or were announced for construction. More than 20,000, new jobs were created, and as a result of industrial gains the wages paid to our industrial workers increased by $133,000,000. The average wage paid in our industry has increased from $1,477 in 1946 to $2,026 last year, a gain of $549. At the same time, the value of the industrial products we produce in this State has increased by almost $700,000,000.
These are dry statistics, but they serve to demonstrate the great strides we are making in industry. And they mean new jobs, higher pay, and better standards of living in every corner of the State.

Through the work of our Research, Planning and Development Board, in cooperation with counties and communities, industrial leaders throughout the nation are learning the many advantages we have to offer. Some of these natural advantages are: a mild, healthful climate; an adequate supply of energetic, capable, native born employees; a favorable tax structure; plentiful raw materials, such as forests, kaolin, sand, tobacco, cotton and cotton-seed; a cooperative attitude on the part of our citizens, and, finally, a strong, stable government ready to assist new industry in any possible way.

We must continue to advertise all these natural advantages, so that the industrial development already begun may go forward with unabated speed in the years to come. We should not be satisfied until we have achieved that balance of agriculture and industry for which our State is so well suited, and which will mean new prosperity for all our citizens.

In the agricultural phase of our development, changes of equal importance are taking place. We are witnessing the birth
of a new day on the farm, an era of increased use of machines and electricity, and of greater production. Our farm population is decreasing, but those who leave the farm are finding their places in industry, and those who remain behind are enjoying higher incomes.

The record shows an amazing increase in our per capita income on the farm in a brief period. In 1946, the average per capita income of farmers was only $126 in South Carolina, approximately one-fourth the national average. Last year it had arisen to $604, and this time it had grown to almost one-half the national average for farmers. At the same time, our farmers produced $61,000,000 more in gross income last year than they did in 1946.

We must not rest until our farm income is on a level more nearly approaching that of other states of the nation. One of the best ways is to encourage mechanization, which goes hand in hand with higher farm income. It has been pointed out that the State of Iowa, with an average of one tractor per farm, in 1946 produced an average yield of 52 bushels of corn to the acre. South Carolina, with only one tractor for every 14 farms, produced an average yield of only 19 bushels to the acre.
More efficient crop production methods will also invariably mean higher income. A good illustration is in cotton production in South Carolina over the last 20 years. Proper spacing and proper use of fertilizer has improved our cotton crop so much in that period that we are now producing an average of 377 pounds per acre, as compared with 147 pounds 20 years ago. As the yield increases, more land can be released to grow other crops in a diversified program.

Some of the more vital needs of our agricultural economy are: a better system of all-weather rural roads; increased rural electrification and telephone lines; an intensified training program for the young people on the farm, including better rural schools and increased vocational education opportunities; increased use of soil conservation methods and forest conservation practices; expansion of our processing, storage, and marketing facilities, and increased number of canneries, freezer lockers, and dehydrating plants.

All these things should be parts of a over-all agricultural development program which will be a necessary and profitable adjunct to our industrial advancement.
There are other fields of endeavor which must be given equal importance. One of these is that of improving the educational standards of our people. Better education always leads to better incomes, and education is the means by which we can most rapidly equip our people to take their places in the more prosperous state.

We can be proud of some of our recent accomplishments in this phase of our development. For the first time, in 1947, a regular nine-months' school term was provided on a permanent basis. In the last two years, we have made provision for a $10,000,000 permanent improvement program in our educational institutions. At the same time, we have increased teachers' salaries on an average of 50 per cent in the last two years, from an average of $1152 in 1946 to $1762 in 1948.

During the same period, our expenditures for education per pupil enrolled increased by 45 per cent. We are now 11th from the top among the states in the percentage of our income that we spend for education. This is remarkable when you consider that we are 46th, near the bottom, in our ability to pay for education.

If our economic and social aims are to be realized, we must continue to give education the important place it deserves in our state-wide scheme of things.
Our health standards must, of course, occupy an equally large share of our attention. A healthy man is a happy, productive employee. With good health, he is an asset to industry. Without it, his production is lowered and his income suffers.

In recent years our State has made steady advances in this field. The new teaching-clinic hospital room to be constructed at the Medical College in Charleston at a cost of approximately $4,000,000 will provide new opportunities for medical training. In the last two years, the State has provided $3,660,000 for hospital building assistance and for the construction of local health centers. To encourage the training of doctors for our rural areas, 10 scholarships to the Medical College are being provided for young men who agree to practice in the country.

There is much that remains to be done in our health program. Our shortage of doctors, nurses, and dentists is an acute one. Our hospital beds number only slightly more than 2 per 1,000 population, whereas we should have about 4 per 1,000. We need to expand our services in the field of preventive medicine, including free dental and physical examinations for children entering school. Such things must be given their proper place in our effort to improve the living standards of South Carolinians.
There is one other phase of our development which I should mention briefly today, in view of the occasion which brings us together. That is the matter of good roads and bridges.

I am proud to report that we have made tremendous strides in developing our highway system in the past two years. In that period we have built 100 new bridges, at a cost of $6,500,000, and we have paved 2,193 miles of roads costing $30,000,000. Today our system is second to none in the nation in quality of construction, safety, and directional markings. We now have 15,596 miles in the system, of which 8,356 miles are paved.

Good roads and bridges are an absolute necessity for economic improvement. They stimulate trade by speeding up transportation; they assist our consolidated school program; they make new opportunities for farmers to get their produce to market; they provide access to recreational areas, and they build good will for our State by enhancing its reputation elsewhere.

As an illustration, the Walter Andrews Memorial Bridge will provide a new access to the Port of Charleston for the business and industry of the great Pee Dee section. The port is already providing a vastly increased opportunity to industry, and its service will be more quickly available to
a large area, because of this new bridge.

In the last few years, our State ports have won a position of tremendous importance in our economic scheme. They will serve in time to raise the economic potential of business and industrial opportunity of every section of South Carolina. The development of the Port of Charleston, through the State Ports Authority, makes an amazing story. The port handles nearly $45,000,000 in exports last year, and this was more than double its exports in 1946. The 1948 exports through the port were more than five times the pre-war total. In addition, Charleston's annual imports aggregate about $8,000,000 per year.

The port at Georgetown is now being dredged to a 27-foot depth, and when completed, will furnish regular shipping service to industries already located at Georgetown, as well as encouraging the development of new industry in that territory. It is gratifying to the people of the State that the Georgetown port project is now being rushed to conclusion, and that this port will soon be activated in full.

A project has recently been approved for the dredging of the port at Beaufort to a 24 foot depth, and when it is reactivated, this port will open a large area of the State which has been undeveloped. The reactivation of traditional Port Royal will be an accomplishment of great worth.
Today, our South Carolinian may be optimistic about our future, if we will continue to work together in the over-all program of development I have briefly discussed. And to achieve our twin goals of economic and social happiness, we must continue to insist upon a State government that is honest, efficient, cooperative, and aggressive.

Nowhere on earth is economic opportunity greater than right here in South Carolina. Let us work together toward the realization of our most cherished hope, a new era of economic well-being and social progress for our people.