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Address at Two-State Masonic Meeting, Augusta, Georgia

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ADDRESS BY J. STROM THURMOND, GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA, AT TWO-STATE MASONIC MEETING, AUGUSTA, GEORGIA, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1949.

It is always a pleasure to visit the fine old City of Augusta, which we South Carolinians like to think belongs to us as much as to Georgia. The occasion today makes our visit an added pleasure, because it's always a privilege to attend a Masonic meeting, when good men and true may get together under the harmony of the great principles they share in common. In South Carolina we really believe in Masonry. It is our largest fraternal organization, and I am sure it is in Georgia.

There is an excellent reason for the devotion so many men have for the Masonic order. The three and a quarter million Masons in this country are bound together by faith in principles as everlasting as the mountains and the seas.

The other day I had occasion to review some of the undying and unchanging principles of our order. The effort was well worth while, for I was struck with the realization that the principles of Masonry are almost identical with the basic principles of Americanism. That is a good thing for a Mason to know and to remember.
We believe in reverence for the Supreme Being, and in immortality of the soul. Surely no principle is more characteristic of Americanism than that, and no other principle has had more to do with American history.

We believe in fraternalism, the brotherhood of man, and the duty of one man to another. Americans never could have carved out new homes in this continent, if it had not been for this spirit of helpfulness and brotherliness.

We believe in the improvement of the individual, and in the value of progress through personal effort. The very core of the American system of free enterprise is this principle of faith in mankind's ability to improve himself.

We believe in the equality of justice, the right of every man to fair treatment. From the earliest times, Americans have built the structure of their democracy on the cornerstone of equal justice to all men.

And finally, Masons believe firmly in the right of mankind to enjoy liberty -- religious liberty and political liberty. Freedom to worship and the freedom of self-government were the most cherished aims of our forefathers, when they
settled this continent, and when they wrote the American Constitution to make their new land secure.

It is not surprising, therefore, that some of the greatest of the early American patriots were Masons, and that the Masonic ideals were prominent in the great documents they created as permanent assurances of American liberty.

Just as the Masonic order existed before the American Constitution was written, so that American ideal or its counter-part existed in the hearts of men long before the North American continent was discovered. Millions of men in other parts of the world had believed in the same principles we believe in, and dreamed the same dreams. But few men had ever been able to put those principles into practice, or to realize those dreams, before the American nation came into being. No group of men had ever been able to maintain those principles of freedom for any great period of time.

In reviewing the basic precepts of Masonry, I was struck with another thought — that our principles are completely inconsistent with the philosophy of the total state. The kind of government that existed in Germany, Italy and Japan, and which led to World War II, is a complete violation of
the great beliefs of the Masonic order. Masonry thrives only in an atmosphere of democracy. It cannot flourish in a land where the people are servants of the state. Since it is based on faith in the essential dignity and worth of the individual man, Masonry is crushed to earth under a government founded on the principle that the individual is nothing, and the state everything.

As an illustration, the Masonic order is just now beginning to get on its feet again in Italy, where the fascist ideal was triumphant for so long. Nearly 25 years ago, the dictator Mussolini suppressed and persecuted Italian Masons because they would not go along with his plans for the total state. Today, democratic principles are flourishing again in Italy, and Masonry is being revived.

It is true that one of the rules of our fraternity is that the Masonic order, as an organization, does not participate in political affairs. This does not mean, however, that a Mason must stand idly by at a time when the liberties he holds dear are being threatened. The true Mason is a good citizen, and the good citizen makes his voice heard when the principles of his country and of his order are threatened.
I think it is well for us, today, to remember the fate of Masonry in the totalitarian countries, and to ask ourselves whether the same fate may not be in store for Masonry in America if some of the governmental trends evident today are not stopped.

The philosophy of the total state was not crushed when Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo were brought to their doom. That philosophy, preached and practiced by the agents of Communism, is threatening individual freedom all over the world today. The subjection of the individual to the state is the aim of the Communists, just as it was the aim of Hitler and Mussolini.

Only one influence of any importance is being brought to bear against that threat — the resources and power of the American people. It has been truly said that the eyes of the suffering world 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 only for the latest developments in science, the latest inventions, and to see how many dollars we will give away, but also they are watching something deeper, something more important than material things. They are watching to see whether our system
of democratic government can stand the test of the pressure caused by our new position of world leadership. They know 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 and personal freedom. The British Empire, once the most powerful union on earth, is almost bankrupt. The French and the Dutch are struggling to hold onto their last remnants of power.

We, as Americans — as Masons — are therefore faced with the greatest challenge ever to confront us. The American spirit is going to be tested in the years ahead as never before. The desire of mankind for freedom depends now almost solely upon the manner in which Americans can stand up to the test.

To meet that challenge, we cannot depend alone upon the strength of our military machine, or upon the atom bomb, or new and more horrible methods of biological warfare. We should be foolish to rely entirely upon such weapons.

The question of internal security is far more important than military might. We must have a strong and vigorous people first. You will recall that it was not by
the strength of our arms alone/that we were able to tip the
balance of victory in World War II. Without the unbelievably
vast amount of goods and material produced in America, the
war could not have been won.

The production record of the American people
during the war/was possible only because of the value and
efficiency of our system of free enterprise. Those goods for
war were produced by free men, working on their own initiative,
and at tasks which they chose for 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 their 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 democratic way/must be made to work better than ever
before. That is the sensible and logical viewpoint.

Nevertheless, we are compelled to admit that all
is not well with the American people today. Our basic beliefs
in free enterprise and individual liberty/are undergoing
dangerous assaults from within our own borders. Philosophies of government which are foreign in origin and alien to the American system are gaining headway every day. The people's rights under the Constitution are being threatened by proposals in Washington which strike at the very heart of our dual system of government.

Too many of our people are inclined to forget that our democracy is based upon local self government. It has grown fashionable to look to Washington to solve all our troubles, both civic and personal. Our people have been turning more and more toward the national government, and forgetting the responsibilities of local and state government. The time has come when we must reverse that trend, if we are going to preserve our liberties and Constitutional government. This centralization of power in the federal government to the detriment of the states and the people can only be stopped at the ballot box. There must be a rebirth in this country of the responsibilities of citizenship. In many elections, only a small fraction of our people participate in deciding vital issues. Those who want special favors and consideration from government are organizing into great blocs
of voters. Politicians fear their strength, and do their bidding. They are shoving this nation down a road of socialism and bankruptcy.

All Americans realize today that there are necessary controls which government should exercise in an economy so vast as ours. We all know that there are many fields in which government can serve to make our lives more secure. We know that in wartime the executive branch of the government must be given almost complete power. We know that sometimes there are emergencies in peacetime which must be met with government action.

No thoughtful citizen wants to hamper the federal government in exercising its responsibility to the people under the Constitution. We must have a strong and stable government to protect us from aggression and to help preserve peace in this world. There are many other fields where the federal government can and must operate in building a stronger America. We cannot, however, go along creating such new programs as socialized medicine and further increase the national debt.

The conflict in America today is one of individualism.
versus collectivism -- personal freedom versus government control. The nature of collectivism is to make the individual secondary to the state. That is why it is inconsistent with Americanism. The American way is built upon the struggle of the individual to improve himself. This struggle for self-improvement has prompted Americans always to seek new and better ways of doing things, so that more people may have happier and more comfortable lives. Our inventive genius, stimulated by the desire for self-improvement, has given the world the steamship, the cotton gin, the telegraph, the telephone, the automobile, the airplane and television. It has harnessed electricity, brought machinery to the farm, and created the assembly line to bring all these blessings to the average man in greater numbers than he enjoys anywhere else on earth.

The American way has made us the richest nation in the world, with the highest per capita wealth on earth. We have 60% of the world's life insurance, 85% of the world's automobiles, 54% of the world's telephones, 48% of the world's radios, 46% of the world's electric power, 35% of the world's railways, and 30% of the world's improved roads. About 15,000,000
Americans own their own homes, and about 4,000,000 own farms. We spend about 4 billion dollars a year on education, which is almost as much as is spent by all other nations together, including Russia. Our 150,000,000 people earn more wages than all the 550,000,000 people of Europe. Our wages are the world's highest, and they buy more and better conveniences than can be bought anywhere else.

Those are some of the fruits of the American system of individual initiative and free enterprise. No socialistic or communistic government can match them. Let us remember, there is no such thing as modified national socialism. You cannot modify socialism. And you cannot have socialism without destroying the American system. But the Pendergast politicians in Washington are leading many otherwise intelligent Americans into the belief that our people must be coddled and petted with "just a little socialism" so that they will not yield to the doctrines of Communism.

That is the immediate danger that we face as Masons and as citizens today. Remember, it is easy to fall victim to the expert propaganda of the socialists, who have been practicing their arts of deception for many years. It
is easy to listen to the beguiling promises of the politicians, who talk only about what they are going to do for you, and never mention what they are going to do to you.

We are witnesses today of the socialistic regime which has brought England to the verge of national bankruptcy. When we consider the sad plight of the English, we should remember that when their present program was presented to the people in 1945, no mention was ever made of the word "socialism."

The British public did not know at that time what kettle of fish they were buying. They eagerly accepted the program, without realizing what the inevitable consequences would be.

The socialists never offer their bitter pills without a coating of sugar, and they never offer all the pills at one time. Their assaults on the American way of life are made in installments, because they know that if they attempted to promulgate their entire program at one time/that none of it/would ever get past the American people.

We are forced to admit that we sometimes grow lax in our defenses/when such programs are offered. The benefits of freedom have brought us prosperity, and during periods of prosperity, we are not so quick to discern the steady progress of the insidious program which leads to
centralization of government and the loss of personal freedom. As South Carolina's great Calhoun once said: "We have passed through so many years of prosperity, we have passed through so many difficulties and dangers without the loss of liberty, that we begin to think that we hold it by divine right from heaven itself. It is harder to preserve than to obtain liberty."

The picture today is not entirely gloomy, however. There are hopeful signs all about us that the American people are waking up to the challenge that confronts them. American ideals are being remembered and discussed with a new frequency. A slowly awakening interest in what is happening to our government is evident everywhere. During the past year, I have received thousands of letters from people in all walks of life and from every state in the nation, testifying to the concern of the writers for the safety of basic American principles.

As Masons and as citizens, we owe it to our country and to ourselves to become staunch advocates of those American principles which have made our nation the greatest on the face of the earth. We need a large dose of old-fashioned
Americanism in this country — not the empty bragging kind, but the self-respecting, self-critical kind of Americanism of our forefathers.

Honest, out-spoken pride in our country is more to be desired than the false kind of cynical attitude which merely complains of America's faults while it forgets her virtues. We have a right to be proud of America, and of what our people have accomplished under the liberties we enjoy.

We have a right to the inspiration of a just pride — pride in our noble traditions of democracy, pride in the sturdy character of our people, and pride in our energetic and God-fearing spirit.

The right kind of Americanism should keep us ever vigilant to preserve and protect our way of life so that every American may continue to enjoy the fruits of his toil without regimentation and dictatorship.

The right kind of Americanism should lift our hearts with the faith that the American way shall some day lead the world to prosperity and lasting peace.

The right kind of Americanism should fill our hearts with the determination that the great American ideals