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Address at States Rights Dinner

Strom Thurmond

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Mr. Chairman, Governor Thurmond, Fellow Americans: or shall I say "fellow American Democrats"? In all this broad land none are so entitled to be called American. In all this broad land none are so entitled to be called Democrats. If the name of that synthetic splinter over which Mr. Truman presides, for which Senator McGrath is overseer and Senator Humphrey philosopher, the splinter that stands for federalism—gone—mad and socialism—come—creeping, if the name of that is National Democratic, then all the more is your name American Democratic. You are as American as George Washington. You are as Democratic as Thomas Jefferson and John Calhoun and Woodrow Wilson.

I am proud to speak for you tonight in salute to another man of history. Because he is a living man, and young, and lives in a state where politics never cease, he is destined to much political rough and tumble. But let it never be forgotten that he is also this man of history, part of the South's great story, the nation's own song, and that whatever you do to him or for him politically in days to come he is entitled to your eternal respect and salute.

Salute then, fellow American Democrats, to a gallant leader, a right honorable gentleman, a man of courage that shames all cravens, a man of States Rights liberalism and light—Strom Thurmond. The salute which President Truman refused to give in return for your own loyal one, governor, as you rode by him with the wise and beautiful young woman who is South Carolina's first lady, yours as a loyal American, a veteran of your country's military service, governor of this sovereign state, that salute your fellow countrymen tonight and throughout this South offer you in million-handed substitute.

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You rode by the Inaugural stand as an American, as we of your States Rights
cause ride by. This is no movement of secession, any more than John Calhoun’s was.
It is a move against what makes for secession, as Calhoun’s was. It is a movement of
participation. We propose to go on being our Uncle Sam’s nephew more than ever. We
mean to go on contributing our taxes, our songs, and our fighting men in greater per-
cent than any other Americans. We are for all the aids and all the obligations that
belonging to this greatest nation means. We are weary of lost causes and thin red lines.
We are for a nation “one and indivisible”.

And we know that what makes our nation one and indivisible, as Calhoun said
and as, in this day, that wise philosopher, Walter Lippman, is pointing out, is respect
for the regions making it up. And we know that of all the differing regions ours is the one
that differs most. It differs because of cotton, because of climate, because of a more
greatly surviving agriculture, and because ours is the only region ever devastated by war
and the stamp is on us still. It differs even more because of the most delicate and dif-
ficult race problem with which any people anywhere ever had to deal.

And, if only we can be free enough of our nest foulers at home to make the rest
of the country see it, this Southern regionalism makes us the most American of all Americans
now. Our sense of what an uncomprehending and all-controlling government at Washington
can do to our specially-circumstanced civilization in the South lets us see more clearly
and fervently than any other Americans what this same sort of government can do to America
itself, to the whole great way of liberty and self-government and man in an Image.

The communists are clear about their party line. They know its every dotted “i”
and crossed “t”, and they are religious about it, too. But we are dim about ours. We’ve
had it so long, been sure so long it was the right and great line, that we have half forgotten what it says and how it feels. What is the party line of America? What is the philosophy for which the specially-circumstanced South most stands at this hour? What is the basis of our magnificent American proposition that men can be free and have human welfare, too? It is line in two points. A point against too much government. A point against government too far from the people.

It is a point against too much government. We believe that democracy and controlled economy are incompatible, that beyond a certain point a government can control a great nation's economic life, with all the intricacies and wheels within wheels, only by making itself a dictator government - and that even then it won't work. Mr. Justice Douglas - and he and Senator Hubert Humphrey are the two most likely successors to Mr. Truman in 1952 as nominee of the National Democratic Party - says the great invention of the Twentieth Century is "the Human Welfare State". All of us who are decent are for human welfare. All of us who are open-eyed know there must be more and more, even though Americans, whatever their race or region, or class, have more than any others on earth.

But the Human Welfare State! That is something else. That is welfare sought to be achieved by the passing of laws, and more laws, by the sending around of policemen, by the setting up of bureaus and commission, by the making of rules and regulations and the filling in of questionnaires in triplicate forever. If this Human Welfare State is the invention of the Twentieth Century, it was not invented in Washington. It was invented in Moscow. For that is what the Russians have. And Russia is what comes of having it. Look at her tonight with her Human Welfare State - a nation without democracy, without liberty, without God, and without human welfare. Democracy and controlled economy, beyond a limit we have be-
gun to reach in our country, are incompatible.

Ours is a point, also, against government too far from home. Democracy and a too centralized government are incompatibles, too. When you have people governed too far from home, you have them governed without understanding and without support of the governed. You have a government that must operate through policemen, through force bills, through arbitrary rule and regulation. We talk of civil liberties, and it is precious talk. But the most civil of all our civil liberties is this one, the liberty to be governed at home on problems belonging at home. People all over this country believe it. Some call it home rule. Some call it local self government. Here in the South we call it by the quaint old name of "States Rights". But whatever you call it, it is one of the two basic principles for America now, one of the two great points in America's party line against forces of despotism and enslavement that are challenging in the name of welfare all that is American and all that is light. Democracy and the too controlling state are incompatible. Democracy and the too central state are incompatible.

And, yet, ladies and gentlemen, you can be told that it is backward to stand for such things. That is because they have indeed been used at times in sorry causes by agents of reaction. But rightly used, they are liberalism in the word's real sense.

The case against the too controlling state, as Senator Taft makes it, for example, is not a case against federal concern for human welfare. He is for a federal floor to misery and underprivilege. He is for federal aids and equalizations without federal controls. He is for federal upspring of business competition. He is for opposing totalitarianism in business as in government and in labor organization. But he is, also, for being free.

And the case against the too central state, as Strom Thurmond makes it, is no
case for the abuses of States Rights which we know exist. Strom Thurmond is for States Rights, but he doesn't mean the right of the strong to prey upon the weak. He doesn't mean the right of the selfish to be let alone in selfishness, of the backward to hold the forward back, or of the chain-gang of prejudice to stop the march of time. He doesn't mean hai-day for our Negro haters and baiters and cheaters and exploiters. We love that race as Henry Grady said we do. They are our companions through history, our brothers under God and the Southern sun, and they are behaving admirably today in spite of humiliations and misleads imposed on them from outside. If there have attached themselves to the States Rights movement some of these exploiters, along with some political hacks and has-beens, and some reactionaries who don't know what time it is, that is the lot of all great political movements. Such men are no kinfolks to Strom Thurmond, and it is Strom Thurmond alone who has the South's mandate. It is he alone who has been voted for by a million Southerners, and it is he alone who must and, I believe, will, stamp the States Rights movement with the liberalism and modern light to hold its place in the great new national political line-up forming dimly but surely now from the creeks and inlets and grass roots of this green land.

It is a time for identifying the South with great American principle. It is a time for holding these principles above party or personality, and for being brave and honest and believing enough to go wherever the principles take us. We may be thankful that the Democratic Party we own with these principles in the Deep South today and mean to go on owning is not the party Vice President Barkley calls on us to support. It is not the party in whose name President Truman and Senator Humphrey and Chairman McGrath are proposing to eat the South and have it, too.
It is a party based on eternal principles and holding itself, let us resolve, subordinate to those principles. One of the great contributions the South can make in this hour of flux and confusion is its faith in things eternal, principles that do not change. That faith cursed us once when we stood too still, but today, with motion everywhere, and most of all in Southern States, it is our stabilizer, our balance wheel, our heart of progress. There are things eternal, and we know it. Eternal right and wrong, eternal love of liberty and excellence, eternal God, and, yes, an eternal South.

The eternal South! Made of the land and the way our people love it. Made of the climate, and what it does to the blood, bone and bright fancy of those who breathe it. Made of the latitudes and longitudes, the shorelines and elevations, the rocks and trees and running streams. Made of this miracle of Southern springtime, the fertilities of summer, the technicolors of autumn, the generosities of rain, the multiplying pines, the wine-making sun, the love-making moon - and what these do to you and me, and have done to all who went before and will do to those who come after!

The eternal South! In its sign, in its serenity as atoms split and planets boil, let's take our stand with Strom Thurmond - for freedom of American enterprise, for States Rights, and for men in the Image of God!

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