6-6-1950

Senate campaign address on civil rights program

Strom Thurmond
Fellow South Carolinians:

Those of us who fought for states rights in 1948 warned the people that it was the purpose of the Truman-Pendergast leadership of the national democratic party to abolish separation of the races in the South.

The Trumanites in our midst fought to prevent the Southern States from carrying out the Southern Governors program, which would have thrown the election into the House of Representatives with the South holding the balance of power, and which would have enabled the democrats of the south once again to exert powerful influence in the policies of the national party.

The Trumanites told our people that it was not the purpose of the Truman administration to break down racial separation.

Since the 1948 election we have seen the president order integration of the races in the armed forces against the advice of our generals. We have seen racial separation abolished in federal housing projects by executive fiat. And finally we have seen the Supreme Court, responding to the appeal of the Truman administration through its Attorney General J. Howard McGrath, render three decisions only yesterday which are designed to ultimately break down all forms of separation of the races in South Carolina and the other Southern states.

My opponent in this campaign has been trying to justify his Trumanite activities in 1948 by saying that he believes in fighting our battles within the national party. Let us see just how he has fought.

In 1948 when the Southern Governors went to J. Howard McGrath, who was then national chairman of the Democratic Party, and pleaded with him to abandon the civil rights program in the interest of party unity and harmony, he turned a deaf ear.

The F.E.P.C. bill against which my opponent boasts of his filibuster was sponsored by J. Howard McGrath.
When President Truman appointed J. Howard McGrath recently to be Attorney General, so that he could put the whole weight of the Department of Justice and the F.B.I. behind the drive to stuff the civil rights program down our throats, his appointment was not resisted by my opponent. On the contrary, he met with a select group of J. Howard McGrath's senatorial friends and celebrated McGrath's confirmation. I have in my hand a picture taken of this festive occasion, which shows my opponent with a glass in his hand joining others in drinking a toast to J. Howard McGrath. In fact, my opponent is the closest senator in the picture to McGrath.

Is this what he calls fighting our battles within the party?

When the three cases came before the U. S. Supreme Court which were decided yesterday, what did Attorney General McGrath do? Did he go into the Supreme Court and represent the Interstate Commerce Commission, as he was supposed to do? No, he fought against the decision of that commission, and asked the court to upset the precedent of more than a half century in order to end separation of the races in dining cars. What did his department do in the other two cases in which the government was not a party? Did it attend to the government business in its hands for handling? No, it intervened in these cases on behalf of the National Association for Advancement of Colored People and asked the Supreme Court to end segregation generally.

It was only natural for my opponent, a Trumanite by his own admission, to celebrate the appointment of McGrath as Truman's right hand man. It was only natural for him to drink a toast to McGrath's confirmation. But it is sheer hypocrisy for him to come back to South Carolina and say that he has been fighting the battles of the people of South Carolina within the national party.

Which part of the people of South Carolina has he been fighting for? The part which is disgusted with Truman-McGrath's activities in the anti-segregation cases or the part which approves ending segregation?

Which part of our people is he trying to cater to in this
campaign? Can he run with the hares and the hounds, and deceive both our white and our colored citizens into believing that he is their champion alike?

Can he really believe that the overwhelming majority of our people are as stupid and gullible as he takes for granted they are?

My friends, his answer to the decisions of the Supreme Court yesterday is Federal aid for public school education in South Carolina. The Federal government has hit us a hard blow, and so his remedy is to lay our necks on the federal chopping block.

There are a great many of our people who have conscientiously thought that we should accept federal aid for our school system as the easiest and quickest way to accomplish the progress in education which we want for both races in our state. The Truman administration, in its campaign to end separation of the races and bring about their integration in the south, has taken note of this conscientious belief, and has endeavored to take advantage of it to pass Federal aid for education to carry their ends. Federal aid for education is a major step in the campaign to integrate the races in the South. It is proposed to write into the law that the schools will remain under state control. This is meaningless, because the Supreme Court has held that it is the duty of the Federal government to control what it subsidizes with federal funds.

My opponent says that we must get federal money to build schools so that we can preserve segregation in our schools. Does he really believe that the Truman administration will give us money to perpetuate segregation? Or is he currying favor with the Washington politicians that he supports and hob-nobs with by helping them sell our people on accepting their federal school aid proposal.

If there is one thing in this country which must not get under the control of the Washington government and federal bureaucrats, it is our system of public education.

Free institutions in America depend on the education of our people, and this does not mean education under an overall federal pattern as a result of which the children of the nation when they
grow up will all think alike and hold the same views of government.

The quickest and easiest way of socializing America or any other country is to get control of its schools, prescribe what is to be taught, what books are to be used, what teachers may or may not say to their pupils, and thus determine what kind of citizens the school children will be when they grow up. Federal control of the schools means inevitable regimentation of our schools, our teachers, and our children. They will ultimately all fit the federal pattern, and no other.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt knew the dangers to our nation of Federal aid for public schools. In 1938 at Athens, Georgia, he said - and I quote -:

"Let us remember well that the Government in Washington should not and cannot rightly subsidize public education throughout the United States. That must remain wholly free, wholly independent, Education should be run by the states and their subdivisions and not by the Federal government." Those are the words of President Franklin Roosevelt in 1938.

Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn also knows the dangers to our nation of federal aid for public schools. Only this year he wrote - and I quote -:

"I am now, and have been, opposed to federal aid for education. Once you start giving federal funds, you get federal control, too, in the long run .... I know that the federal government contributes money to few things that it doesn't ultimately run, in its entirety, or is in a position to do so, when it desires. I can imagine our voting money, in hundreds of millions, then somebody get up and offer an amendment providing that no part of these funds be used in any state where there is segregation in the schools among the races. If a roll call was had on that, it would certainly carry---then we would be paying for something we weren't getting." Those are the words of Speaker of the National House of Representatives, Sam Rayburn, of Texas.
And now I want to call as a witness another who as Governor of South Carolina saw clearly the dangers of federal aid to public schools. This witness is my opponent, who was then Governor. At the National Governors Conference in 1937 Governor Olin D. Johnston said:

"The danger of too much centralization, of too much federal authority, or federal influence, is certainly real, if not readily apparent."

He said, and again I quote:

"It may very well be promised that the states would have the privilege of controlling their schools under national legislation. It may be that laws sufficiently strong to guarantee absolute independence for the states could be drafted.

"On the other hand, however, there could be no guarantee that another administration might not come along and change the whole set-up, if we ever let down the bars sufficiently to allow federal authority to govern the operation of schools. Manifestly, we cannot read the minds of future administrations."

He also said, and I quote:

"On states rights in public education, however, my mind is made up. Our earnest efforts for education in South Carolina cannot be questioned. But if it comes to a question of surrendering in its entirety the state control of schools for money, South Carolina will not accept such a proposal."

He explained why. He said that a federal bureau would be created. He then said, and I quote again:

"This bureau would move to adopt standards and theories and ideas, and probably propaganda, which would be packaged in capsules for the public school system of America and the children in our schools, all of the schools, irrespective of what might be prevailing local conditions in any given state."

Yet in the face of this record, my opponent now goes around saying that he is not one of those who has changed his stand on federal aid for education.

The Truman-McGrath program and the Supreme Court decisions make it crystal clear that we cannot accept federal funds for general education and retain control of our schools.

In the last four years, South Carolina has increased our
annual appropriations for school teachers salaries millions of dollars more than the total amount proposed to be allocated under the pending federal school aid bill. As a state we are developing in economic means and we can do more for education with our tax dollars by spending them at home instead of voting to send them to Washington, hoping to get back more but probably getting back nothing. We have long since learned that federal funds are not free. They come out of the toil and sweat of our people just as do state funds. We must explode the idea that money which comes from Washington costs us nothing.

We do not have to endanger or jeopardize our free public school system by making it dependent on handouts from Washington, especially when these handouts are our tax dollars that have been sent to Washington and then are permitted to trickle back to us according to the whims and fancy of that ever growing army of bureaucrats on the Potomac.

My friends the time has come in South Carolina when we must resist further centralization and concentration of power in Washington if we are going to save our form of government in America. We need in the Senate men who stand for something. The threat to our institutions and our customs is too serious to have men in Washington who will not stand and fight but will play around with and give aid and comfort to those forces which have openly declared their intention of ending our way of life in South Carolina.

In conclusion I want to appeal again to the real Democrats of South Carolina to get their names on the registration books before they close next Saturday. We have read what has been going on over South Carolina. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, one of the Truman organizations fighting my election to the Senate, is boasting that as a result of the decision of a turn coat federal judge they will register 100,000 colored people to vote in our primary. This association, which has just won the sweeping victory in the three Supreme Court decisions, is pouring money into South Carolina to dominate the July 11th election. I call on every true South Carolina Democrat, those who believe in the principles of the Democratic Party as delcared in the 1948 and
1950 state conventions, to see to it that our full voting strength is registered, and that it votes. If we do this, we are assured of victory on July 11 and we will turn back once again those who seek to destroy our institutions and the things which have made our state grow and prosper.

###

- 7 -