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Statement at Senate campaign meeting about Johnston's influence

Strom Thurmond

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My opponent has been going over South Carolina talking about what
great influence he has in Washington because he is chairman of the
Post Office Committee and is a member of the Agriculture Committee. He
has tried to make the people believe that when I get to Washington I
will not be assigned to any Senate committees and because President
Truman is mad at me because of my fight for Southern democracy in 1948,
I cannot accomplish anything for South Carolina.

That kind of talk just shows one of two things. My opponent is
either trying to deceive the people of South Carolina or he has no con­
ception of the duties of a United States Senator and he does not know
how to use the power that goes with the highest office in the gift of
the people of our state.

The greatest power of a United States Senator is the right of un­
limited speech on the floor of the United States Senate. The Trumanites
endeavored to take that away from the Senate but they were defeated. A
Senator who has the courage and the ability to speak out can use his
rights on the floor of the Senate in a manner which no bureaucrat or not
even the President will dare to ignore.

The trouble with my opponent is that after he double-crossed the
Democratic party of South Carolina and supported Truman, he became
wrapped up in trying to please the Pendergast gang. He hoped that a
few crumbs would drop to him from the White House table and he dared not
exercise the powers which South Carolina gave him as a United States Senator.

Congress still controls the purse strings and fixes the policies
which the executive branch of the government must carry out. A United
States Senator, who stands for something, will get a hundred times more
for his state than a wishy-washy Senator who talks one way in South
Carolina and another way in Washington.
My friends, remember this-- a courageous foe! Truman in the Senate will get more for South Carolina than a weak kneed friend who snuggles up to the President in Washington and denounces him in South Carolina.

The greatest thing a Senator from South Carolina can do for his people is to help preserve their freedom and to prevent Truman from putting over his anti-segregation program. You can't accept favors from a man and fight his program at the same time unless you are an ingrate.

As long as Harry Truman is in the White House, and I hope that will be for only two years of my six year term, South Carolina and the South can expect nothing from the administration unless it is willing to barter away our institutions and our traditions.

What South Carolina and the South has got to do is rid the Democratic party of the Truman-Pendergast leadership and we cannot do it sending Trumanites to the United States Senate.

If the time has come in America when a sovereign state must elect a United States Senator because he is in favor with the President, then we may as well kiss our freedom goodbye.

That is what my opponent would have you believe but everyone knows that is not true. That is the same kind of bunk they tried to put over in North Carolina and Florida but the Democrats in those states did not fall for it.

Four States went States Rights and against Truman in 1948. Practically all of the members of Congress from these states supported the action of their respective state democratic party in opposing Truman. The notable exception was my opponent in this race. He says he had to vote for Truman to protect his committee assignments.

That is a reflection, ladies and gentlemen, on your intelligence. Congress controls committee assignments and not Truman. The Democrats in Congress don't judge the standing of a Democrat on whether he is for
Truman or against him. If he wins the Democratic nomination of the state democratic party and is elected he is a Democrat and is so recognized. Not a single Senator or Congressman who voted States Rights in 1948 has lost his committee assignments. Most of them have been promoted.

Southern democracy is on the move again. As Chairman of the Southern Governors Conference I have attained a position which will stand me in good stead when I get to the Senate. And if I do not get better committee assignments and do more for South Carolina and our people, their institutions, and their traditions, than my opponent has done during his wobbling six years in the United States Senate, I will retire from public life.

What has my opponent done since he has been in Washington? He talks a lot about what he is going to do but little about what he has done, because he has done nothing to justify his return to the Senate.

My opponent, of course, thinks both he and Truman have done a wonderful job. He voted to raise his salary from $10,000 to $12,500 a year with $2,500 tax exempt money thrown in. When he turned around and voted to raise Truman's salary to $100,000 a year with $50,000 tax free money thrown in.

That is the way my opponent practices economy as a member of Congress.

My opponent boasts of his postal committee chairmanship. If he had any influence why did he permit a reduction in the postal service in this country for the first time in 100 years and cause thousands of letter carriers to double up and others to lose their jobs? He took care of himself and Mr. Truman but he did not do so well in looking after the letter carriers.

Another thing, if my opponent has so much influence in Washington as a result of his postal chairmanship why has he permitted negro mail clerks to root out the white mail clerks on mail cars? The next time you see a train pass through your town, see how many negro clerks there are working in the car with the white clerks.
If my opponent's committee chairmanship gives him so much prestige why has he permitted this kind of stuff to go on?

Mr. Truman has broken down segregation throughout the government service and white girls are now being forced to work in Washington under negro bureaucrats put there by Truman in paying off the minority blocs which swung doubtful states to him in the last election.

Now they are invading the South and our own state of South Carolina with their program. The way to stop Truman and his anti-Southern program is to send real Senators to Washington who have the courage to stand on the floor of the Senate and fight for states rights. My opponent has not done that. He ran out on his people in 1948 and plumped for Truman. He, like some other Southern senators, has been weighed in the balance of Southern democracy and found wanting. That is the reason the South is going to have some new faces and new voices in the United States Senate when the new Congress convenes next January.