Address for Senate campaign meeting

Strom Thurmond

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I am happy indeed to be here in Charleston County, the county which voted 5 to 1 for the States Rights ticket of the Democratic Party of South Carolina two years ago.

The people of Charleston have been in the forefront of every fight to uphold constitutional government and the traditions of Southern Democracy throughout our State's long history. You were in the forefront of the fight for States Rights two years ago, and you are in the forefront of the States Rights fight today. You were worthy of the tradition of the great John C. Calhoun who sleeps in St. Phillips Churchyard and of Robert Y. Hayne, who debated States Rights with Daniel Webster, and who was once the head of your city government. Charleston is steeped in States Rights history and this great fundamental principle of government must be preserved if our people are going to continue to enjoy their freedom under home rule.

It must be as encouraging to you in Charleston as it is to me to see the struggle which we waged two years ago bearing fruit today in increasing measure. There were some who thought the fight was ended when the election of November 1946 was over. They were never more mistaken in their lives. We had only gotten off to a good start. In recent weeks we have seen Florida and North Carolina follow our lead and join up with States Rights Democracy. The
people in Florida and North Carolina express in no uncertain terms their opposition to the Truman-Pendergast program to return the South to conditions which prevailed in the bitter Reconstruction period. They repudiated those who have supported the crowd in Washington which is trying to stuff the so-called civil rights program down the South's throat. The people of Florida and North Carolina have given their answer to Truman and his Pendergast crowd at the ballot box in the traditional American way, by electing to the United States Senate men who owe allegiance to no one except to the people of their states. Florida and North Carolina have joined in the fight which South Carolina has led from the very beginning, and on July 11th the people of South Carolina will see to it that our answer to the assaults on our way of life in South Carolina is just as crystal clear.

In the fight which I have waged for Southern Democracy, I have been heckled by Trumanites plenty of times. When I rose in the Philadelphia Democratic convention two years ago to second the nomination of that great Southern leader, Senator Russell of Georgia, for President, I was hissed and booed by the Trumanite galleries. In this very campaign, the Trumanites have used the same tactics. They wanted to keep the people in the Piedmont counties from hearing the truth, but they failed in their purpose. The crowds got larger and larger, and the Piedmont campaign meetings turned into one Thurmond rally after another. Even those
who mistakenly followed the Trumanite leadership of my opponent two years ago have plainly and openly showed that they are for States Rights now, and are going to let the world know it at the ballot boxes on July 11th.

I predict here and now that the tide of Southern Democracy and Southern political courage will continue to rise until it finally engulfs the forces which have temporarily gotten control of the leadership of the National Democratic party, and which are currying political favor with minorities of the big cities of the East and middle West and stabbing the South in the back. The immediate battle ground will be in the United States Senate. We are glad to see other Southern States realizing this, and sending men there who will not wear the Truman-Pendergast political ring in their nose. Although our people voted overwhelmingly to repudiate the kind of leadership which is trying to break down our traditions and customs, South Carolina has been represented for the past two years by a Trumanite in the Senate. The time has come when the people can at last do something about. Next Tuesday the real Democrats of South Carolina, from the mountains to the sea, are going to rise up and remove from the Senate of the United States the Senator who deserted the Democratic Party of South Carolina in violation of his pledge when he ran for the Senate. My opponent helped Truman get the mandate from the people he claims to have to carry out his program of ending segregation and destroying states rights, local self-government and
home rule. In November 1948 my opponent walked out on the Democratic Party of South Carolina and took up with the Trumanites. In July 1950 the real Democrats of South Carolina standing shoulder to shoulder will set the record straight by walking out on my opponent.

In his desperation, my opponent has been making all kinds of claims, both about himself and about me. Let me give you a good example. When we spoke in St. George, my opponent in the middle of his speech asked the crowd "Who saved the Charleston Navy Yard", and some one promptly yelled "Maybank". The crowd roared with laughter and enjoyed my opponent's discomfort. Can you imagine anything more ridiculous than for my opponent to horn in and try to take credit for the work which your own Senator Burnet R. Maybank and your own Congressman L. Mendel Rivers have been doing to see that the Charleston Navy Yard received the recognition that it is entitled to on its merits and importance? Our great United States Senator, Benjamin Ryan Tillman from Edgefield County farthered the Charleston Navy Yard and Strom Thurmond from Edgefield County pledges you that I will at all times assist Charleston County's Burnet Maybank and Mendel Rivers in every way possible to see that your navy yard grows as it should. After all, you must never forget that the Congress holds the purse strings, and there are enough Senators in the United States Senate who speak the same kind of language you and I do to see that the Pendergast machine temporarily operating in the White House does
not play peanut politics with something as important to the National defense as the Charleston Navy Yard and our other national defense activities.

It must sound like a joke to the people of Charleston to hear my opponent posing as a friend of Charleston. The people remember how he vilified and abused Charleston in 1930 when he went out over the state talking about ballot burning and stirring up sectional prejudice against Charleston. He can't do this again; however, because Charleston County has taken the progressive step of installing voting machines in your elections.

The people of Charleston have not forgotten how my opponent called out the national guard to seize ballot boxes in 1938 from the officials of the Democratic Party of Charleston County in his efforts to keep Burnet Maybank from being elected Governor of South Carolina.

That Sunday the people, including ladies and little children, who went to church on Meeting Street, had to pass through lines of soldiers. My opponent vetoed the bill of Mendel Rivers to create the St. Phillips and St. Michaels Public Service District in Charleston County, and that bill became law only because the General Assembly overrode my opponent's veto with fixed bayonets in peaceful Charleston.

If there is any living man who has constantly made war on Charleston it is my opponent in this race. He created so much sectional feeling in South Carolina that it took years of effort on the part of your representatives and people including myself in other parts of the State to restore the good feeling which he destroyed by his vilification and abuse of Charleston for selfish political purposes. He used to abuse Charleston up-state to get there.

When he ran against Burnet Maybank for the United States Senate
and was defeated, he put a full page ad in the paper trying to prejudice the people of the state against Senator Maybank because he came from Charleston. It is a crowning piece of effrontery for my opponent to pretend to you that he is a friend of your city and County.

I was gratified to see from the census figures recently published that Charleston County has grown in population in the past ten years. You have had the biggest increase of any County in the State.

I attribute much of this growth to the splendid progress which has been made in the past several years in the State's program of developing the Port of Charleston, South Carolina, as a State, needs the magnificent contribution to the economic welfare of the whole State that it should be. I have given unfailing support to the work of the S. C. State Ports authority in the wonderful work it has been doing, and as your United States Senator, I shall continue at all times to back this great program. Your port is as fine as any in this part of the world, and it has been used by me time and time again as a powerful argument which I have used as Governor to locate in my work of persuading new industries to come to South Carolina.

Every citizen in every part of the State should be behind the program to develop the port of Charleston.

Every section of our State is behind the development of Charleston's port, and the support of a united people of the State will make it once again a major world port.
Now I want to discuss with you for a few moments a new low water mark in South Carolina political campaigns. In previous races, my opponent has demonstrated a great capacity to swing on to the coat-tail of some other man in public life with the hope that he could win political favor. But in this race he has become so desperate that he is trying to swing on every coat-tail he can get his hands on.

My opponent is not satisfied having the Truman minority bloc organizations coming into this state and trying to help return him to the Senate by bloc voting in our primary. He sent out an S.O.S. to a former Truman cabinet officer and now Senator to get him to brag on my opponent. Well, that does not surprise any one. I am sure he could get a telegram from any Trumanite in Washington because the Trumanites stand together and my opponent is a Trumanite.

As long as my opponent sticks to testimonials of the Trumanites to prop up his sinking campaign, he can get by with it although I am sure the Democrats of South Carolina resent people from outside the State trying to tell them how to vote.

But when my opponent starts using the pictures of Southern Democrats who do not boot lick Truman and warps statements by these gentlemen for his own selfish gains then he oversteps all bounds of ethics and decency in a political campaign.

I have charged and my opponent cannot deny it that he sat with folded arms in the Senate and did not utter one word in support of the
Russell-Maybank amendment to prohibit the breaking down of segregation in the armed forces by law. Other Southern Senators spoke and my opponent was on the floor of the Senate at the time, but he remained quiet. He was playing footsies under the table with Mr. Truman and he dared not open his mouth lest he irritate the man he deserted the Democratic Party of South Carolina to support and also lose some negro votes in South Carolina.

I cited the Congressional Record and showed it to my opponent in Spartanburg. A few days later, he rushes into the newspapers with a big advertisement trying to twist a statement by Senator Russell around to show that he had opposed breaking down segregation in the armed forces. He claimed that the Russell group of Southern Senators had mapped plans for opposing the Truman order and that it was not necessary for him to say anything on the floor of the Senate or in public. Now I have caught my opponent dead handed on this claim and I want you to listen closely:

Here is a telegram I sent to Senator Russell:

"Senator Olin D. Johnston over his signature in advertisements in today's papers prints your telegram of June 27, 1950, and says your 'telegram answers Governor J. Strom Thurmond's charges that I did not raise my voice against the Truman anti-segregation orders.'"

"I have no desire to involve a Senator from another State in a South Carolina Senatorial contest, and I regret my opponent has brought you into our race in a manner which misleads our people.

"To keep the record straight, I would appreciate your wiring me your answers to these questions:"

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1. Did Senator Johnston speak in behalf of the Russell-Maybank amendment to prohibit by law the abrogation of segregation in the armed forces when it was debated on the floor of the Senate on June 8 and 9, 1943?

2. Was the Truman order abolishing segregation in the armed forces ever before the group of 22 Senators referred to in your telegram of June 27?"

And here is Senator Russell's reply:

"I wish to reiterate that I have no desire to inject myself into the South Carolina primary, but I shall undertake to answer your questions to the best of my ability and recollection. The Congressional Record of June 8 and June 9, 1943 is the highest and best evidence as to what transpired on the floor of the Senate during consideration of my amendment to permit enlistees and draftees to express a preference to serve with a unit composed of members of their own race."

Well, the Congressional Record shows that my opponent did not open his mouth during those two days of debate in the Senate and that takes care of question one.

Continuing, Senator Russell said:

"In answer to your second question. I do not recall that the group of Southern Senators ever had a formal meeting on the subject of the Truman order or my amendment. It was mentioned in the course of our general discussion of our difficulties in opposing the Anti-Truman legislation pressed by the administration in the Congress under the false guise of civil rights. I may say that I have also consulted a number of other Southern senators who attended these conferences and their recollection
That's from Dick Russell, ladies and gentlemen, and he refutes the claim of my opponent in his effort to cover up the fact that he sat in Washington for two long years and not once did he use his high office to stop Truman's order eliminating segregation in the armed forces.