1-24-1950

Address at Annual Convention of Ruritan National Clubs

Strom Thurmond

Follow this and additional works at: https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/strom

Materials in this collection may be protected by copyright law (Title 17, U.S. code). Use of these materials beyond the exceptions provided for in the Fair Use and Educational Use clauses of the U.S. Copyright Law may violate federal law.

For additional rights information, please contact Kirstin O'Keefe (kokeefe [at] clemson [dot] edu)

For additional information about the collections, please contact the Special Collections and Archives by phone at 864.656.3031 or via email at cuscl [at] clemson [dot] edu

Recommended Citation
Thurmond, Strom, 'Address at Annual Convention of Ruritan National Clubs' (1950). Strom Thurmond Collection, Mss100. 953.
https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/strom/953

For additional information about the collection, please contact the Special Collections and Archives by phone at 864.656.3031 or via email at cuscl [at] clemson [dot] edu

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Manuscript Collections at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in Strom Thurmond Collection, Mss100 by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.
ADDRESS BY J. STROM THURMOND, GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA, AT ANNUAL CONVENTION OF RURITAN NATIONAL CLUBS, OCEAN FOREST HOTEL, MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA, TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, 1950.

Mr. Chairman, members of Ruritan National, and Distinguished Guests:

It is an unusual pleasure to me to welcome, on behalf of the people of South Carolina, the delegates to the Ruritan National Convention and their guests. We are honored that you have chosen the beautiful resort city of Myrtle Beach for your convention, and we sincerely hope your stay will be pleasant and profitable.

I have watched the work of the Ruritan Clubs with interest and admiration for several years. I was born in a small town and reared on a farm. I have farmed all my life and served as Agricultural Teacher for 6 years. I know the importance of the work you are doing. It seems to me you have chosen one of the finest possible fields of community service -- that of bringing together, into common bonds of friendship and civic enterprise, the agricultural community and the small town community.

The growth of Ruritan National into more than 100 clubs in several states is a wholesome sign of American progress. I hope some day the Ruritan influence will extend into every state in the nation, and that thousands of rural communities will enjoy the benefits of your community projects, your civic enterprise, and your noble ideals.
It is a tribute that the Ruritan Club was born in the little town of Holland in the grand old state of N.C. in a Southern state, and it is here in the South that your efforts will be most fruitful. The South needs the kind of service you can render, for the time we live in is a most critical period for every Southern state. The conditions under which we live are changing so rapidly that life has become a real challenge to every citizen, no matter how small may be the community in which he lives. For the most part, conditions in the South are changing for the better, and we may now look forward with confidence to the most hopeful years the South has enjoyed since the War Between the States.

The truth is that the South is leading the nation in the march of progress. In the fields of agriculture and industry -- the twin foundation stones of our economy -- the states from Maryland to Texas are gaining more rapidly than any other section of the country.

To make these achievements, the South has struggled upward against almost insurmountable obstacles. For many years after the War Between the States, our people were crushed and poverty-stricken. Their wealth and their economy had been wiped out by a tragic war, from which they sought to recover without the benefit of a Marshall Plan. In their effort to achieve prosperity, two major obstacles stood in their way -- one-sided tariff restrictions and
discriminatory freight rates. The effect of these handicaps was to keep the South in a colonial status, producing raw materials at low cost and buying back finished products at high cost.

Despite these obstacles, the South has pulled itself up by its own bootstraps. The courage, energy, and ability of our people, combined with our overwhelming natural advantages, have brought us close to the day when a balance of agriculture and industry will make the southern states the envy of the world.

We may find a new source of confidence in the future from the fact that the South is winning its battle for equalization of freight rates. For many years we have struggled under a 39% handicap in competing with northern and eastern shippers, because of discriminatory freight rates. Removal of this barrier has been a primary objective of the Southern Governors' Conference through its Freight Rate Committee, of which I served as Chairman for the past two years. A short while ago, it was my pleasure to announce that the last major obstacle to freight rate equality had been removed. This was the decision of the Interstate Commerce Commission refusing to permit Western railroads to reopen the entire question of a reclassification of rates, and thus to delay progress still further. I am gratified to say that the road to equal rates is now open, and as Chairman of the Southern Governors' Conference this year, I shall
continue the fight until equalization is a reality.

Revolutionary changes are taking place in the agricultural and rural life of the South. Farmers are gaining ground in their battle to conserve and improve their soils. They are increasing their yields per acre, and improving the quality of their crops. Cotton, tobacco, and truck crop systems of farming are being balanced with increased numbers of livestock. The quality of that livestock and the production of meat, milk, and eggs are rising steadily. Marked progress is being made in controlling crops and livestock insects, diseases, and parasites.

Efficiency in production is being advanced through mechanization and other labor-saving practices. The one-man-one-mule farmer is fast being replaced by the farmer who operates modern, efficient farm machinery and equipment, and thereby increases his ability to produce and raises the standard of living of his family.

Rural electric lines are reaching more farms every year. Farm homes and buildings are being improved for comfort, efficiency, and general appearance. Farmers are giving greater attention to producing more food and feed for better farm living.

The progress of mechanization on southern farms is shown by the fact that the number of horses and mules in 13 southern states decreased by over 3 million between 1920 and 1945. At the
same time, the number of tractors on farms increased from 34,163 in 1920 to 443,029 in 1945, or 1,197 per cent. Other up-to-date farm machinery and equipment on southern farms have made similar increases.

The acreage devoted to cotton in the South has been cut almost in half, without decreasing the total production of cotton in bales. In 1929, southern farmers planted about forty-three and a quarter million acres of cotton and produced a little over fourteen and three quarters million bales. In 1948, they planted only about half as much acreage and produced the same number of bales. Thus they reduced their acreage by 47%, yet they increased their yields, in spite of the boll weevil and other ills that beset the production of cotton.

The use of land is changing in the South. The land taken from cotton has been put into the production of food and feed crops, pastures, and crops other than cotton.

As a consequence, a new "king" is arising on the southern scene, and his name is "livestock." In 1925, only 21% of farm income in the 13 southern states came from livestock, while in 1948, our farmers derived 37% of their income from livestock. In the past five years, new high records have been made in the production per animal of milk, eggs, meat, and other livestock products.
Many agricultural leaders believe that the South can find an important new source of wealth in livestock production. Our pastures are as good in January as they are in June, and we can sell fat cattle or milk direct from the grass in winter as in summer. Our livestock can harvest crops and pasture for themselves 12 months of the year, thereby saving labor, reducing the cost of production, and enriching the land.

The natural agricultural advantages of the South offer opportunities that promise a steadily growing income in the years to come. Plants, animals, soils, climate, and rainfall combine in favor of high production, with diversification to meet changing needs. Our agricultural economy includes the three major farm products of food, fat, and fiber, while most other areas have only one or two of these three. Our land, with good management, produces abundantly while it is being improved. Two crops can be produced on the same land in one year. Forest trees, which offer a new opportunity as a cash crop, grow much faster in the South than they do in most of the United States.

These advantages are being reflected in tremendous gains in our farm income. A recent survey by the Department of Commerce showed that farmers of the Southeast received an average of almost 300 per cent more cash for their products in 1948 than they
did several years ago. These gains mean a better standard of living for every southern farmer.

The southern states have enjoyed even greater gains in the establishment of new industries. The South's business and industrial growth has far surpassed the national average since the end of the war. A recent survey by the Department of Commerce showed that, during the years 1944 to 1949, the South's industrial and business growth in this respect was 44%, while for the nation as a whole it was 30%.

During these five years, the number of business establishments in the South increased from 276,300 to 398,200. In 1949, a total of about forty-eight thousand new businesses moved into Dixie, a percentage increase of 19%. With South Carolina and Mississippi leading the way in every important industrial field, gains exceeded the national average, and the same was true of wholesale, retail, and service establishments.

One of the principal reasons for the shift of industry to the South is the trend among manufacturers to decentralize their operations. This trend was started as an emergency measure during the war, and it has continued without interruption since then. The ever-present danger of atomic warfare makes it advisable to build new plants away from the heavily populated centers.

There are other reasons, equally good, which are causing
industry to turn southward.

We have a mild, healthful climate which makes for better working efficiency, and which greatly reduces the problem of heating in winter. We enjoy a good distribution of rainfall throughout the year, without a wet or a dry season to hamper operations.

We have a plentiful supply of native-born people, who need and want jobs. They are friendly and hard-working, and they are great producers. In fact, the president of one great textile concern has said that our people produce an average of 10% more goods/than workers of other areas.

The tax structures of southern states are generally favorable to industry, and state governments are as a rule hospitable to industrial development.

We have an abundant supply of raw materials, such as cotton, forest woods, kaolin and other clays, sand, minerals and other natural resources/upon which industry must depend for its existence.

Costs of operation are generally cheaper in the South. Plant sites are available at low cost, construction is cheaper, and power and water cost less.

Finally, the South offers the nation's most promising market. As the income of our people rises, a vast untapped market
for goods will be made available, and business and industry want to be as close to that market as possible.

Because of all these advantages, the South may expect its industrial growth to continue with little change over the next few years. A nation-wide survey published last year showed that industry has completed plans to spend 41 billion dollars for expansion during the four years from 1950 to 1954. During the next 12 years, industry plans to increase its total capacity by 50%. The South's share of this expansion will continue to be a greater one, according to the survey. During the 12-year period, the South may reasonably expect to increase its industrial potential by 100%.

Changing agricultural conditions in the South fit remarkably well into this picture of industrial growth. The progress of mechanization on the farm is releasing hundreds of thousands of people into other kinds of work. The population on farms in the 13 southern states decreased by nearly 4,500,000 from 1920 to 1945, a decrease of 28%. Since the total population of these states remained about the same, it is evident that these 4,500,000 people found jobs in industry or business. The trend is continuing, and it is estimated that two out of three persons now being born on our farms will have to find employment outside the farm.

One of the most significant factors to consider is
that many of our farm people may continue to live on the farm/

while they earn wages in a nearby industry. With good roads and
good cars, a man may drive 15 to 20 miles to work every day, while
he continues to enjoy the healthy life to be found on the farm. An
eight-hour working day will still leave him time to milk a cow or
two, raise some pigs, and tend a vegetable garden. Meanwhile, good
wages will enable him to improve the appearance of his home and give
his children the advantage of decent surroundings. The rapid spread
of rural electrification means that he can enjoy all the comforts
and benefits of modern appliances, and save his wife much of the
hard work of other days.

With some time left to listen to the radio, read his
newspapers, and visit his neighbors, this man will become a more
intelligent individual and a better citizen. He will be happier,
healthier, and more confident of his ability to provide for himself.

Today, he can find work not far from home in a
modern, attractive plant designed to help him enjoy his work and
thereby increase his production and his income.

The same thing is true of thousands of small town
residents who formerly were forced to leave home in order to make a
living. As the South's industry expands, these people will be able
to find jobs nearby while they continue to enjoy the healthy, normal
existence of the small town.

These factors are of tremendous importance, not only in the re-building of the South's economy, but in their effect on the kind of government our states will have in the future.

For years we have recognized that the South's many difficulties are basically economic. The fact that our states have remained for so long at the bottom of the list in educational advantages, for instance, has not been due to our unwillingness to provide them. It has been due entirely to our inability to provide the money for new schools, better paid teachers, and other needed services. Our people had existed on a subsistence level for so long that many needs could not be met.

As our average per capita income rises, this picture is changing. The man who has money in his pocket will see that his children are educated, that they have proper medical attention, and that they are properly trained in the means of making a living. Such a man will become a taxpayer, and thus help to enable his state government to provide the services that are essential to social betterment.

The southern states may, therefore, face the future with an ever-growing confidence in the ability of our people to provide the means for greater educational opportunities, better roads,
increased services to the farmer and the laboring man, and for
better care of the unfortunate. Our problems are still vast, but
they need not dismay us. No people on earth may look forward to
a more hopeful future.

In view of such prospects, our states can and should
assume an increasing share of the burden of responsibility to our
people. We have every reason to believe that the states can meet
those responsibilities adequately, and with self-reliance.

We should no longer encourage our people to look to
the national government in Washington to provide every governmental
service. The need for new services should be met by the people through
their state governments, which are close to home and which can be
quickly controlled by the people themselves.

There are many fields in which the state may cooperate
with the Federal government for the benefit of its people. Such
activities, however, must be limited to those fields which are
clearly within the constitutional jurisdiction of the Federal government
and properly its responsibility.

In recent months we have observed a tendency on the
part of the Federal government to encroach upon spheres of activity
which are reserved to the states under the Constitution. The present
administration in Washington has encouraged this trend by advocating measures which would result in giving the Federal government control over our elections, over our police, over employment, over local business, over our courts, over separation of the races, over our National Guard, and over many other fields of activity which the Constitution clearly states shall be reserved to the states.

Meanwhile, the Federal government is steadily growing bigger, and the bigger it gets the harder it will be for the people to control it. Its budget is so vast that no one man can hope to attain an intelligent grasp of it, and the national debt has reached the astronomical figure of 250 billion dollars.

Despite these facts, the regime now in power in Washington is demanding ever greater expenditures. Moreover, it is operating the government in the red to the extent of nearly six billion dollars a year. And it proposes to continue to carry this huge deficit for years to come while at the same time it invades new fields of taxation and governmental activities which were heretofore the proper sphere of the states.

One way to understand just how big that six billion dollar deficit is would be to state it in terms of one state's expenditures. South Carolina, for instance, could operate at its
present level on six billion dollars for more than a half-century.

In recent years, the national government has invaded almost every possible field of taxation, and, as a result, its expenditures have grown far out of proportion to those of local and state governments.

In 1929, the total cost of federal, state, and local governments was 11 billion dollars. In 1949 this total had reached 57 billion dollars, increasing more than five times. The significant point is that in 1929, federal expenditures amounted to 30% of the total, while local and state expenditures amounted to 70%. Today, that position has been exactly reversed. The national government now spends 70% of the money, while the local and state governments spend 30%.

The problem of the relationship between these three spheres of government, therefore, has reached a critical stage. It deserves the earnest consideration of every American who is concerned with the future of his country.

Thus far, the pattern of governmental relationships has been allowed to develop haphazardly in every direction. The almost inevitable result has been greater centralization of authority in the national government. Unless the American people re-examine that pattern, we may one day find ourselves entirely dependent on a
national government so remote from the people's control/that we will have great difficulty in keeping it democratic.

Too much centralization of power in Washington/will weaken the citizen's control over his government, and weaken his feeling of self-reliance. Once this happens, America will be an easy mark for the rise of a dictator, either from outside our borders or from within.

We must remember the traditional American principle/that the best government/ is the government which is closest to the people. We must remember, too, that the greatness of America/has been achieved by a self-reliant people, working in freedom, under the best system of free enterprise ever devised by mankind.

Here in the South, our people are rightfully demanding better services from their government. To get those services, they should be encouraged to turn more and more to their local and state governments, and not to a distant authority over which they have so little control.

In view of the rapidly improving economic picture, the people of the South/may confidently expect to be able to provide many added services/which will improve the lot of all our citizens. We are moving forward steadily and surely toward that desirable balance of agriculture and industry/which will enable us all to live
happier and healthier lives.

As we approach that goal, let us resolve that the advent of economic prosperity shall find us still self-reliant, still self-respecting, and still free men under God.