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Statement at Senate campaign meeting. Segregation

Strom Thurmond

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SEGREGATION

Those of us who fought for States Rights in 1948, insisted that it was the purpose of the National Democratic Party, under the Truman-Pendergast leadership, to abolish segregation in the South. The Trumanites fought to prevent the Southern States from carrying out the Southern Conference program, which would have thrown the election in the electoral college with the South holding the balance of power, and they told our people it was not the purpose of the Truman administration to break down segregation.

In previous speeches, I have told how the President has played politics with the national defense of this country when he eliminated segregation in the armed forces against the advice of our generals.

Yesterday the Supreme Court, responding to the appeal of the Truman administration through Attorney General Howard McGrath, rendered three decisions which are designed to ultimately break down all forms of segregation in the South.

I have not read the texts of the decisions, but from what has gone on before we know it is the objective of the Truman administration to force the South to integrate the races in the South as it has done in the armed forces and in federal housing projects.

These new and unprecedented decisions of the Supreme Court are the fruits of the campaign President Truman and his cohorts have been waging against the South during the last two years.

In 1948 I sought to warn our people what was going on and what we could expect if the South did not unite and fight the Truman program. To the everlasting credit of the Democratic Party of South Carolina, let it be said that we stood firm by the principles upon which our party was founded, and our electoral votes were not cast for the man who now seeks to destroy our way of life. To the everlasting discredit of the man whom I oppose in this race for the Senate, let it be said that he betrayed the Democratic Party of South Carolina, and has his share of the responsibility for the Truman program to break down segregation.
Not only did my opponent fight the program of the Southern Governors Conference by deserting the Democratic Party of South Carolina and supporting Truman, but his failure as a real spokesman for South Carolina democracy in the Senate contributed to what the Supreme Court did yesterday.

To back up that assertion, I must tell you the story of a Rhode Island Senator named J. Howard McGrath. When the Southern Governors went to Washington in 1948 and pleaded with this Rhode Island Senator, who was then national chairman of the Democratic Party, to abandon the civil rights program in the interest of party harmony and unity, McGrath turned a deaf ear to our plea.

In the Senate, McGrath was the author of the F.E.P.C. bill, which was the keystone of the Truman civil rights program, the legislation my opponent takes such credit for filibustering.

President Truman next appointed J. Howard McGrath Attorney General, so that he could use the power of the Department of Justice to stuff the civil rights program down our throats through court action. McGrath started on this at once. When the Interstate Commerce Commission upheld segregation in railroad dining cars under decisions of the Supreme Court, Attorney General McGrath went into the Supreme Court and fought against the Commission instead of representing it, as was his duty. McGrath's department intervened in the education anti-segregation cases, although the government was not a party, and asked the Supreme Court to overturn the court's decisions of more than half a century, and outlaw segregation. The Attorney General of the United States went before the Supreme Court and asked the Court in behalf of the government not to enforce the Constitution, but to change its meaning, and the court did just that.

Now, how has my opponent stood on J. Howard McGrath, Truman's right handman in the fight against the South's institutions? I hold in my hand a picture taken just after McGrath's confirmation as Attorney General, which shows Senator Olin D. Johnston and a select few other Senators drinking a toast to the confirmation of J. Howard McGrath.

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My opponent knew that H. Howard McGrath is the man who
turned the Southern Governors down when they asked for an end to
the civil rights program in the interest of party unity.

My opponent knew that the F.E.P.C. was the McGrath bill.

My opponent knew that as Attorney General, J. Howard McGrath
would be able to use the Department of Justice and the F.B.I. to put
the civil rights program over, in spite of the failure of Congress
to pass the bills. My opponent did not raise his voice on the floor
of the Senate or vote against his confirmation as he could have done
in the Senate. Instead, he celebrated his confirmation by joining
with others in drinking a toast to him. In fact, he is closer to
McGrath in the picture than any other Senator.

Is this what my opponent means when he advocates fighting our
battles within the Party? I tell you that as United States Senator,
I shall be alert in the exercise of the power to confirm executive
appointees, to see that South Carolina's interests are better pro-
tected, and I shall never celebrate the confirmation of your
avowed foe by drinking a toast to him.

If we are going to preserve our way of life in the South and
maintain our rights as sovereign states under the Constitution we
have got to have men in the Senate who stand for something. The
South has got to have effective leadership in the Senate. South
Carolina makes no contribution to that leadership when her junior
senator drinks a toast to Harry Truman's hatchet man on civil
rights and the next summer seeks to get reelected denouncing the
Trumanites he helped elevate to high places.

These Supreme Court decisions, which were promoted by this
man McGrath, once again demonstrate the wisdom of opposing further
concentration of power in the federal government in Washington.
We must reverse that trend if our institutions are to survive.

What is going on in Washington should make us fight harder
than ever against the federal government securing control of our
public schools. I sincerely hope that our teachers will see the
wisdom of my position in opposing federal aid to education, and
will look to the state and local governments for continuing to
build up our public school system. We have made great strides
in increasing state support of our schools in the last four years, and if our teachers will press their case vigorously at home, they will get more solid and lasting benefits.

If the powers that be in Washington attempt to break down segregation in the colleges which the state supports, what can we expect in our public schools if the federal government appropriates money for them? Nothing but integration of the races and regimentation of curricula, of teachers, and of pupils.

This Truman-McGrath drive to abolish segregation strikes at every element in South Carolina. Take for instance the farmer and his family who live in our rural areas. The colored people in these rural areas if left alone do not want their children attending the same school with white children, riding the same buses, and using the same playgrounds. But that is what Washington proposes to bring about. Unless we stop the National Association for the Advancement of People from meddling in our affairs and seeking to dominate our Democratic Party in South Carolina and our state government, our farmers living in rural areas are going to be confronted with a most serious and distasteful situation.

Not only our farmers, but those who work in our mills are going to be confronted with a problem if the Truman-McGrath program succeeds; and I will have more to say about that when I get into the Piedmont.

There has been no breaking down of segregation in South Carolina since I have been Governor and there will be none. As your United States Senator I promise I shall never sit idly by and permit an Attorney General or even a Supreme Court Justice confirmed without a fight, if he holds views contrary to the best interests of the South and stands for breaking down constitutional government in these United States.