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Senate campaign television speech

Strom Thurmond

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MY FELLOW DEMOCRATS OF SOUTH CAROLINA:

I want to thank you for the fine support you have given me in this campaign to preserve the right of the people to choose their candidates in primary elections. On September 3rd, the handful of men on the State Democratic Executive Committee arrogated to themselves the power to select a Senator who would represent South Carolina for six years. They thought that interest in their action would soon disappear or die out. You have proved that you want to preserve free primary elections by your strong and growing support of my campaign.

The Committee tried to hood-wink the people by selecting a candidate from their own number and by saying the law required such action on the day they met. But the Attorney General of South Carolina had written an opinion in 1952, declaring that certification of candidates for the General Election ballot 60 days before the election was not mandatory. He had stated nominees could be certified later.

Public indignation forced the members of the Committee to hunt another excuse. So they tried to make you believe there was not enough time for a primary to be held. But the fact is that when Congressman Fulmer died in 1944, some of the same Committeemen required the holding of a primary 12 days after his death. The present candidate of the Committee was one of those who then advocated the primary. He was not a candidate at that time, and was willing to see those who were candidates submit to the people for nomination.

Now as a candidate for the Senate, he fears a primary. He has refused to permit one to be held.

Another excuse put forward was that a primary would cost too much. The Committee candidate claims that it would cost 50 or sixty thousand
dollars. But only $14,500 was necessary in 1941 to hold a special primary when Governor Maybank was elected to the Senate.

As the Honorable George Bell Timmerman, Sr., pointed out at that time, the people of South Carolina would be willing to serve in election posts without pay, if necessary, to provide for a primary.

But let me remind you here of what the candidate of the Committee said even before the Committee met on September 3 to consider a successor to Senator Maybank. Mr. Brown stated in an interview that if a primary were held that it would be a "rump primary" by off-brand Democrats. He has not denied that statement.

You and I know that all the Democrats of South Carolina vote in our primaries. Senator Brown could have meant nobody except you and your neighbors when he made that statement. He was not willing to have the people of South Carolina choose their own Senator. Mr. Brown was afraid to face you in a primary. He has been afraid to meet me in joint debates to discuss the issues of this campaign.

Another phoney issue raised in this campaign, in an effort to divert your attention away from the real issue of free elections, is that of loyalty to the Democratic Party. I am a Democrat. I have always supported the Democratic Party of South Carolina. I have been faithful to the principles of our State Democratic Party. I have pledged
to you in this campaign that I will vote with the Democrats in the organization of the Senate.

If by disloyalty, my opponent means my campaign against Truman in 1948, then he is just as guilty of disloyalty as I am.

According to his own statement, Edgar Brown supported me in that campaign. The Charleston News and Courier of October 17, 1952, quoted my opponent as saying:

"We voted for Thurmond and Wright four years ago because they were the candidates of the Democratic Party of South Carolina, and because they were the best Democrats in the race."

In 1948 Mr. Brown wrote a letter to Joe Blythe, treasurer of the National Democratic Party, in which Mr. Brown condemned the actions of the Truman administration. He advocated the rights of the states.

Not only did my opponent desert the National Democratic Party in 1948, but he agreed to South Carolina Democrats voting for the candidate of their choice in the 1952 presidential election.

On August 6, 1952, at the State Democratic Convention, my opponent proposed a resolution naming electors to support the Democratic nominee for President. But he also accepted an amendment which became part of this resolution. That amendment declared South Carolina Democrats were free to vote for the candidate of their choice for President.
The State Democratic Convention adopted Mr. Brown's resolution as amended. Had Mr. Brown objected to the amendment many more voters would have felt obligated to support the National Democratic ticket.

Apparently my opponent's code of loyalty now differs from the one he followed in 1948 and 1952.

My loyalty is to the Democrats of South Carolina. I owe nothing to the Young Turks, who my opponent charged with destroying the party before he capitulated to their crowd after the Chicago convention.

In spite of the great store my opponent places on loyalty to such Democrats as the Young Turks, there is evidence that the National Democratic Committee is willing to forget disloyalties. In 1948 Senator Glen Taylor of Idaho ran with Henry Wallace on the "Progressive Party" ticket. They were supported by Communists. Both Taylor and Wallace had been Democrats.

This year Taylor is again running for the Senate as a Democrat. He has the blessings and financial assistance of the National Democratic Committee. It has been announced that $3,000.00 has been sent to help in his campaign.

That same committee has sent a large sum of money to be spent on behalf of my opponent. The Senatorial Elections Committee also announced that it has sent $2,500 for his...
benefit. In addition to that, my opponent's campaign manager, Mr. Bennett, is using the more than $10,000 of the South Carolina Democratic Party in an effort to force the dictates of the State Committee on the people of South Carolina.

At least $15,000 to $20,000 that we know of has been put into this campaign by these outside committees and the State Committee. You can speculate as to the total being spent in an effort to defeat the will of the people.

But the people of South Carolina have never permitted the seat of a Senator to be purchased by any individual or any group. I do not believe they will permit it now.

I have pledged to you that, if elected, I will resign in 1956 in time for you to choose in a Democratic Primary the man you want to complete the remaining four years of the Senate term. I will be a candidate for re-election.

But you have a right to know my views on vital topics, even for a two-year term. I regret that my opponent would not meet me in joint debates to discuss his views publicly.

As national president of the Reserve Officers Association, I have discussed our national defense problems with the President of the United States and with the Defense officials in the Pentagon. I have advocated the strengthening of our defenses to keep America strong. Only through strength can we hope to keep our freedom safe from the attacks of godless communism.
As your Senator, I shall vote for strong defense measures and for sufficient appropriations to maintain them.

My record as State Senator and as Governor shows that I have been a friend of the working man. As State Senator, I was author of the bill which increased Workmen's Compensation benefits, and was a member of the committee that wrote the Social Security Law. As Governor, I advocated further increases in Workmen's Compensation benefits, advocated an occupational disease law, and sponsored a system of Area Trade Schools. I worked successfully to help bring diversified industry into South Carolina. We were able to provide 60,000 new jobs in the State and provide industry with many advantages which could not be found in neighboring states.

My efforts on behalf of better schools and increased teachers' salaries are matters of record. They are known to our teachers and school administrators.

One of the problems to which I would give immediate attention in the U. S. Senate is that of farm parity. I will vote for a firm 90 per cent parity for basic farm commodities. Either low prices or the loss of one crop sets a farmer back for several years. If we are to maintain a prosperous national economy, we must have a strong agricultural economy.
As your Senator, I would seek to improve certain phases of the present drought relief program. The handling of applications for relief from drought should be simplified and action on applications speeded up.

Provisions of the disaster program under Public Law 875 should be extended to cover hog and poultry producers as it now covers cattle producers.

Such natural disasters as the freezing of peach crops should be included in the law which covers losses of other crops by drought.

Congress should enact laws to encourage increased exports of farm commodities. This is essential if we are to restore our export markets to the extent that farmers may produce abundantly without the fear of creating burdensome surpluses.

I favor the extension of rural electrification. Electrical and telephone service should be available to every farm home.

From my experience as a soldier, I know the many problems of the service-man and veteran. I shall give my firm support to legislation assuring our veterans of adequate hospitalization benefits. No man who offered his
life for his country should ever be forgotten when he is no longer able to take care of himself. Disabled veterans and their families should be compensated for their sacrifices.

I believe that I have presented to you a program of Americanism which all of us can support whole-heartedly. I shall so endeavor if you elect me to represent you in the Senate.

But before I conclude these remarks there is one other subject I wish to discuss with you.

During this campaign you have heard a great deal of propaganda from my opponent and from his adherents about Mr. Brown's friendship with Senator Maybank. Many of you would have no way of knowing or of finding out whether such statements are true. I would not try to persuade you by a mere expression of my opinion whether friendship existed between Senator Maybank and Mr. Brown. But let me tell you what Mr. Brown himself said about Burnet Maybank.

In July, 1941, when Mr. Maybank was Governor, James F. Byrnes resigned from the Senate to become an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Mr. Brown, who had once been defeated in a race for the United States Senate and once had withdrawn on election eve, charged that Governor Maybank was trying to avoid a primary. Mr. Brown
charged Mr. Maybank would use "high-pressure" methods to get elected in a general election.

Columbia's newspaper, THE STATE, quoted the words of Edgar Brown on July 11, 1941. My opponent, who today proclaims how great was his friendship for Senator Maybank, then declared:

"It is perfectly apparent from the Governor's announcement that the Governor wants to run himself; that he knows he can't be elected in a primary, which he is trying to avoid, and has hurriedly called a general election in which -- it is my guess -- he will himself run and use high-pressure methods to overcome what would otherwise be a repudiation by the state Democratic party of the Governor's high-handed method of doing things."

Contrary to Mr. Brown's statement, Governor Maybank proposed a primary in 1941. In the second primary Mr. Maybank was nominated over Olin D. Johnston.

It is entirely possible that when Senator Maybank became firmly entrenched in the Senate and Mr. Brown wanted favors from him he became a friend of Senator Maybank, but his statement shows that had it been left to Mr. Brown, Mr. Maybank would never have served in the Senate.

The people of South Carolina have fought a determined and ruthless machine in this battle for free elections and the preservation of the primary. I am happy to have been your agent in this battle for principle.
When you go to your voting place on November 2, may the One Who knows our every thought help you to make the right decision for your State and for yourself.