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Statement at States Rights League meeting

Strom Thurmond

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I know that deep in the minds and hearts of each of you here tonight is the question of how to preserve our public schools. Nothing has given me greater concern since May 17, 1954, than the decision of the United States Supreme Court which ruled our school segregation laws unconstitutional.

The implementing decree of the Court on May 31 of this year, although hailed by some as more moderate than the original decree, gave me no greater comfort because it did not change the original ruling in any respect. I was not in public office at the time of the 1954 decision but when the implementing decree was handed down this year, I said:

"I am opposed to the original decision and its implementation. The failure of the Court on May 17, 1954, to recognize well-established Constitutional principles and legal precedents cannot, at this time, be offset by its recognition that local conditions differ. Today's decision did not change the decision of May 17, 1954."

Since the Supreme Court remanded the Clarendon County case to the District Court, we have seen new blows struck against our segregation laws. On July 14, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond declared segregation of passengers on buses in intrastate transportation to be unconstitutional. This decision, as you know, involved a case which arose in Columbia on a city bus.

On July 15, in Columbia, the special three judge Federal Court held a rehearing of the Clarendon case. In his opening
remarks, Judge Parker said:

"Whatever were ... views of this Court as to the
law when the case was originally before us, it is our duty now/
to accept the law as declared by the Supreme Court."

Although the Court did not order the Clarendon District
trustees/to admit Negro pupils immediately to the white schools,
it was made amply clear/that the District Court felt itself
bound/to direct the District/to proceed under the decree of the
Supreme Court.

Since the Clarendon case hearing, the NAACP has sponsored the
filing of several petitions/in the school districts of other
counties in South Carolina/asking admission of Negro pupils to
white schools. These agitators/have placed integração/above
the welfare of the children/of both races. They are more
interested/in racial integração/than in the continued education/
of the children of either race.

Although the Supreme Court/usurped the right of the Congress
to legislate/and invaded the rights of the states, there are some
people who advocate/and others who have been led to believe/that
we should submit to the Court/without resistance.

I/reject/any/such/proposal.

In 1896, the Supreme Court approved the doctrine/of separate
but equal facilities/as the law of the land, but the NAACP/and
its sponsors/did not bow to the decision. Instead, the
integrationists/used every means at their disposal/to
propagandize/for the destruction of the segregation laws/and to
secure a reversal by the present Court of the 1896 decision.

We must resist integration by every legal means— and resist it harder than the integrationists fought against segregation.

I wish I could give you tonight a formula which could be applied to the solution of this problem all over the South. But each school district and each State will have to determine their course or courses on the basis of local conditions. One system may work in one State or one district and not be applicable to others. But within the limits set by the decree of the Supreme Court, I am sure ways and means of classifying pupils can be decided upon which will violate the Court's order yet which will maintain separation of white and Negro pupils. I know that you have the courage and that you will exercise the patience and wisdom necessary to the solution of this problem.