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Address to the Southern Regional Education Board Work Conference on Nuclear Energy

Strom Thurmond

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ADDRESS BY STROM THURMOND TO THE SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD WORK CONFERENCE ON NUCLEAR ENERGY AT THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL, AIKEN, SOUTH CAROLINA, THURSDAY, JUNE 14, 1956, AT 7:15 P.M.

Dr. Anderson, Mr. Cooper, Distinguished Guests, and Friends:

Introduction:
- Regret Lord's absence
- Surprise call from Cooper to make address.
- Establishment of Southern Regional Educational Board.
- Congratulate group for excellent work being done to see what joint action can be taken along atomic lines to benefit the South socially and economically.

It may be truly said that today the South is leading the nation in the march of progress. In the fields of Agriculture, commerce, and industry—the foundation stones of our economy—the states from Delaware to Texas are gaining more rapidly than any other region of the country.

The South is no longer "the land of yesterday." It need not even be called "the land of tomorrow," for it is already a changed South—a land of today," of challenge being met and of opportunity seized.

Despite the overwhelming obstacles of a devastating war that was followed by discriminatory freight rates and other handicaps, the South has waged a successful uphill struggle to cast off her colonial status and to achieve a balanced economy. The courage, energy, and ability of our people, combined with our great natural advantages, have brought us close to the day when balance between agriculture and industry will make the southern states the envy of the world.
Since the War Between the States, one of the greatest barriers to the industrial development of the South was freight rate discrimination. Removal of this barrier was a primary objective of the Southern Governors' Conference since its inception. This objective having now been accomplished, business and industry are turning southward in ever-increasing numbers. In almost every field of endeavor, the South has set the pace for the nation during the past 15 years.

When I was chairman of the Southern Governors' Conference in 1950, we held our meeting that year in Charleston, South Carolina. Incidentally, it was while I was attending this conference in Charleston in November, 1950/that Mr. Reid of the duPont Company and Mr. Curtis Nelson of the Atomic Energy Commission, came to Charleston to inform me of the decision/to locate the Savannah River Plant in our state. At that time I stated, and I reiterate it now, that I was glad that South Carolina and her people/could have a part in helping this nation maintain a free world.

In addressing that Conference in 1950, I made this statement about the 15 state-members of the Southern Governors' Conference at that time:

"In 10 years, the 15 states of the Southern Governors' Conference have enjoyed an increase of approximately 100 billion dollars in total business volume. This was an increase of 350%, compared with an increase of 300% in the other states of the nation.

"During this decade, sales of utilities increased 400%, compared with a 300% increase for the other states. Life insurance sales were up 157%, compared with 126% for the nation. Business telephones increased 113%, while they increased only 74% in the nation as a whole.

"The most impressive increase of the decade was in manufacturing.
The Southern states increased their sales of manufactured products by almost 28 billion dollars, a 500% increase compared with a 350% increase in the other states of the nation. In 10 years the South's industrial growth was 44% - 14% higher than that of the nation.

"In 20 years the South's industrial growth was..."

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"Our own State of South Carolina has recently reached a position near the top in industrial gains. In value added by manufacture, South Carolina registered an increase of 370%, compared with a national average of 204%. In South Carolina during the past 4 years, we have witnessed the coming of new industries and expansions costing over $425,000,000, which have created for us 50,000 new jobs and $100,000,000 annually in new payrolls." (This does not include the billion dollar or its AEC Savannah River Plant/payroll.)

"The 15 states of the Southern Governors' Conference during the past 10 years, enjoyed an increase of 180% in per capita income, compared with an increase of 146% for the nation as a whole." (End Quote)

Since that time, the South has continued to go forward, and it now looms as the brightest spot in the nation.

Industry has many good reasons for turning southward. We have a mild, healthful climate, making for better working efficiency, with a good distribution of rainfall throughout the year. We have a plentiful supply of friendly, capable, energetic people who are outstanding producers, easily trained. Our tax structures are favorable to industry, and our state governments are stable, helpful and hospitable. Costs of operation, including plant sites, construction, water and power, are generally lower. We have an abundant supply of raw materials, such as cotton, forest woods, clays, sand and minerals. And, finally, the South offers the nation's most promising market for industry's goods.
Because of all these advantages, the South may expect its industrial growth to continue with little change over the years ahead.

Revolutionary changes in our agricultural life fit remarkably well into this picture of industrial expansion. Farmers are gaining ground in their battle to conserve and improve their soils. Crop yields and quality are improving. Cotton and tobacco systems of farming are being balanced with livestock. The one-mule farmer has been replaced by an efficient business man who operates modern farm machinery and equipment.

Acreage devoted to cotton in the South has been cut over half, without decreasing total production of the crop. The land taken from cotton has been put into production of food and feed crops, and as a result, a new agricultural "king" is rising on the southern scene. His name is "Livestock."

Thirty years ago, only about 20% of farm income in the southern states came from livestock. This figure has now grown to about 40%.

The average man in the South has much more money to spend today than he had 15 years ago, and that means that he can pay more taxes and support better state services. As tax sources increase, Southern state governments are assuming greater burdens of public service in education, health, welfare and the like.

Education is a good example of this trend. No section of the country has made more progress than the South along educational lines. The establishment of the Southern Regional Education Board is but one illustration of the many steps that have been taken to greatly improve our educational system.

In past years, the southern states have occupied positions near the bottom in many national ratings, but this picture has rapidly changed...
and the eyes of the nation are now directed toward the South.

Turning our thoughts toward atomic lines for a few minutes, it is now conceded that the potentiality for useful purposes of atomic energy in the future is amazing. Of course, this is the principal topic for discussion at your conference here in Aiken.

Atomic energy has two sides. On one side we see that of war and destruction. On the other side, we see the peaceful application of this new force.

I read an address just recently by Dr. Willard Libby, a member of the United States Atomic Energy Commission, which was most revealing and interesting.

He said that the development of the peaceful uses of atomic energy has suffered because of the destructive manner in which atomic energy was introduced into our civilization. It is as though the only use we could think of for electricity was to electrocute people. But we must have a peaceful atom whose beneficence will spread to the far corners of the globe, whose applications will lift the bondsman from his toil and improve his capabilities for the attainment of a peaceful life. It is my honest belief that there is so much good that can come out of the atom that, in the long run, its peaceful applications will far outweigh its destructive capabilities.

From the atomic reaction come by-products--radioactive materials--which can be used in a multitude of ways.

Many of the modern medical advancements in biochemistry and in medicine are in one way or another due to the powerful new investigative tool--the isotope tracer. It seems not unlikely that in the future the isotope will leave the laboratory and go into the hospital,
as it has already to some extent, but in a broader and more important way. At the present time, the elements iodine, phosphorus and sulfur, and a few others, are used in radioactive form, in both diagnosis and in therapy.

In industry, isotopes now benefit the country by saving an estimated $250 million per year in industrial processing costs.

It is gratifying to realize that were we to have no other benefits than the application of isotopes to industry and agriculture, the American people would have a sound financial return on their investment of some $15 billion in the Atomic Energy Commission's far-flung properties. These benefits alone would pay the way. It may take a few years to reach this state, but the probability is good that this will come to pass within five years, and certainly earlier than ten years.

Atomic power, the generation of electric power from the atom, will some day be one of the most important of the peaceful uses. If we consider the present rate of consumption of fuel, the problem of exhaustion is frightening. Within the foreseeable future, all the known resources of coal and oil may be seriously strained--possibly within a few decades, but at the outside in one or two centuries. It is not that atomic power will be displacing coal and hydro-electric power so much as it will be a necessary supplement.

The Atomic Energy Commission is bending every effort, with the aid of private industry, to develop an economical atomic power program in the United States.

In addition to isotopes and atomic power, there are other peaceful uses of the atom. Among them are the use of the radiation which is produced during the chain reaction for sterilizing and pasteurizing...
food, and the use of the heat from atomic reactors for industrial purposes.

The world today watches with deepest interest the latest developments and wonders what the future holds, whether we shall avoid the devastating atomic holocaust and proceed to benefit from the atom, or whether we shall stumble into such a war as the world has never visualized.

The work of this conference will undoubtedly be a vital step in the utilization of atomic energy for the continued and rapid growth of this section and of the nation.

The South has always played a leading part in the development of our great country. I would remind some of the people in other sections today, who are prone to criticize and censure us, that no other section has contributed more to the building of this great nation than has the South.

From the Southern states first came the call for a declaration of independence. It was the great Southerner, Thomas Jefferson, who wrote that immortal document. What the sage of Monticello proclaimed by pen, another great Southerner, George Washington, won with his sword.

After we had won our independence, we were without the machinery of government to preserve and perpetuate it. From the South came the movement that resulted in the Constitutional Convention of 1787. Over that Convention, a Southern General, George Washington, presided. The main principles which the delegates wrote into the Constitution were taken from plans drawn up by James Madison of Virginia and Charles Pinckney of South Carolina.

We have only to read the proceedings of the Constitutional Convention to know the part played by the states we represent in
creating our government.

We do not forget that of the first 25 Presidents, the South contributed 10. In those critical formative years of our Republic, Southern Presidents held the reins of government for 53 years.

Not only in the affairs of government, but in economics, in science, in social development, in education, in religion, and in every field of endeavor that contributes to human progress, the South has made its full contribution in the building of our country.

We are proud of the South. We are proud of her achievements. Just as she has been a leader in the affairs of government and other fields, she will now be a leader in the field of the utilization of Atomic energy for the growth of this section and the benefit of mankind.