Senator Thurmond Resigns; Praised by Colleagues for Service and Fulfilling Pledge to the People

If a special Democratic primary had been held to nominate a successor to Senator Maybank, the voters in that primary would have been bound by South Carolina law and by oath under State Democratic Party rules to support the nominee. A special primary was not held. Therefore, the voters of South Carolina were free to vote for the person of their choice for the full 6-year term in the 1956 general election.

Democrats in every county called on me to lead a write-in campaign as their candidate for the Senate. The view of many political observers was that such a campaign would be hopeless because of the difficulties of write-in balloting.

I believed the people themselves had a right to vote for a candidate of their choice to fill an office, especially since the term of office was for 6 years. I agreed to become a Democratic write-in candidate for the Senate seat left vacant for the term beginning in January 1955.

In the 1954 campaign I stated:

"This is a fight for principle. * * * To make the principle at stake crystal clear, I pledge to the people of South Carolina that if I am elected in the general election on November 2, I will tender my resignation in 1956 in sufficient time to let the Democrats of South Carolina nominate a United States Senator in the regular Democratic primary election that year, which is the earliest regular primary to be held."

On March 21 the State Democratic Convention will be held. One of its functions is to provide for a primary to nominate Democrats for the various offices which will be filled by the voters in November in the general election. Candidates who enter the primary must qualify between noon on March 22 and noon on April 5.

The time has come for me to fulfill my promise to the people of South Carolina. I have tried to choose a course that will be as crystal clear as the principle I upheld in the 1954 campaign.

Today I have delivered my letter of resignation to Governor Timmerman.

The text of the letter states:

"In keeping with the pledge which I made to the people of South Carolina during the 1954 campaign, and in order that the State Democratic convention can place the office to which I was elected on the ballot, I hereby resign as United States Senator effective on and as of April 4, 1956, and I respectfully request that you accept this resignation effective on that date."

The State convention can provide for a primary to nominate a candidate for the remaining 4 years of the 6-year term to which I was elected. The Democrats of South Carolina can have the opportunity of nominating the person of their choice on June 12. Any person who desires to enter the primary as a candidate has sufficient notice.

I shall be a candidate for renomination in the primary to succeed myself in the Senate. My resignation was made effective April 4, the day before the closings of the books for qualification and before the campaign opens. Because of the unprecedented circumstances of the 1954 senatorial election, I would not want to have any advantage which might result from my holding office during this primary campaign.

My resignation will guarantee a free and open primary election for South Carolina Democrats. I believe the course I have taken in resigning, and in making this announcement a month before the effective date, fulfills to the utmost the pledge I made to the people in 1954.

The trust reposed in me by the people has been deeply appreciated, and I have tried at all times to reward this trust by exerting my best efforts on behalf of the State and the Nation.

Mr. McCLELLAN. Mr. President, I have just listened with much regret to the announcement just made by our distinguished colleague, the junior Senator from South Carolina.

First, I commend him for keeping and carrying out the promise to which he referred, which is one of the most noble acts of his State during the campaign in 1954 when he was elected. I think that is most commendable.

I think also it is appropriate for me, as the chairman of the Committee on Government Operations, on which committee the distinguished junior Senator from South Carolina has served since he became a Member of the Senate, to say that he is to be commended for the splendid work he has done as a member of that committee. I cannot say I was surprised, but I was highly gratified, when Senator Thurmond was assigned to the Committee on Government Operations. He immediately evidenced a clear grasp of the legislative process. He has proved to be a most valuable member of that committee.

Furthermore, we who have observed him—and all of us have observed his fine work here in the Senate—are fully convinced that the junior Senator from South Carolina has the capacity and the qualities essential to become a great Senator, an able representative of the sov-
erain State of South Carolina. It is my hope, which I take the liberty to express, since the Senator has announced that he will be a candidate to succeed himself in the coming election, that he will be successful in his campaign, and that the people of the great State of South Carolina will return him to this body, at which time he will have the opportunity to continue his distinguished career as a Senator of the United States Senate.

I shall miss the junior Senator from South Carolina during what I trust will be only a brief absence from the Senate. It would be my desire when he returns that he should again be assigned as a member of the Committee on Government Operations, if I should still be serving as the chairman of that committee. The junior Senator from South Carolina has been a valued member of the committee. If he is returned by his people and shall be so assigned, I know he will make a splendid contribution to the work of the committee, and above all, to the deliberations of the Senate, as well.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I deeply regret that the junior Senator from South Carolina [Mr. THURMOND], has thought it proper to resign from the Senate; but I am consoled by the fact that I believe his absence will be only temporary, and I express the hope that it will be.

During my service in the Senate, I do not know of any Senator who has won for himself a more enviable position in the minds of his colleagues than has the junior Senator from South Carolina.

He has been extremely diligent in his senatorial duties, has shown a wide range of knowledge of governmental affairs, and has contributed in a most substantial way to steps looking to a better government, and, especially, to the preservation of the fundamental principles of our great Government.

I knew Senator THURMOND when he was Governor of South Carolina, where he made a very notable record.

Personally, I regret very much his resignation. I have hope he will soon be back among us to continue the splendid work he is so ably performing.

Mr. STENNIS. Mr. President, I, too, deeply regret that the junior Senator from South Carolina, because of the circumstances he has related, will not be with us for a while. I have found him to be a very active Senator. Although he has been a Member of the Senate for only a little more than a year, he has taken a very active part in the consideration of many of the major bills and other matters pending before Congress.

I have found the junior Senator from South Carolina to be a man of great sincerity. He is what I would call an effective Senator. That, after all, is the ultimate test.

I know of his great interest in military affairs, and especially of his wonderful knowledge of the Reserve program, and in the promotion of that program he has been active before the Committee on Armed Services. In his own State, also, he has been interested in the Reserve program, and in both branches of the military program. He has been most helpful to the members of the Committee on Armed Services.

I trust that in the course of a few months he will be re-elected to the Senate, so that he may continue his excellent service, and add new luster to the distinguished record he has already made.

Mr. EASTLAND. Mr. President, I certainly regret the resignation of the Senator from South Carolina [Mr. THURMOND], but I am most happy that he will be back with us in a few months. I have never known a Senator in so short a time to make greater progress or to rise higher than has the Senator from South Carolina.

As my colleague [Mr. STENNIS] stated, the Senator from South Carolina has been a very effective Senator. He is one of the most popular Members of this body. He is conscientious, his character stands well above any other, and I think he is a great asset to the State of South Carolina.

I was privileged at one time, a few years ago, to support him for President of the United States, and I believe he would have made a very fine President, as he has made an outstanding record as a Senator.

Mr. CARLSON, Mr. President, I should not like the opportunity to pass without saying a word in reference to the statement just made by the junior Senator from South Carolina [Mr. THURMOND]. I assume we on the minority side could well say that we would welcome having a Republican Senator from the State of South Carolina, but if such a hope cannot be realized, I sincerely trust the people of South Carolina, in their good judgment, will return to the Senate the present junior Senator from South Carolina.

I had the privilege of serving as Governor of the State of Kansas while the distinguished junior Senator from South Carolina was Governor of the great State of South Carolina. It was a pleasure to work with him then. It has been a pleasure to be associated with him and to work with him as a Senator. He is not only an able Senator but has been an asset to his great State and to the United States of America.

Mr. THURMOND, Mr. President, I should like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to the Senator from Virginia, the Senator from Arkansas, the junior Senator and the senior Senator from Mississippi, and the Senator from Louisiana, for their kind remarks about my resignation. Again, I should like to say it has been a great pleasure to be a Member of the Senate with those gentlefolk and the other Members of the Senate, and I shall greatly miss them.