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Address to Greenville, SC, American Legion Post

Strom Thurmond

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ADDRESS OF SENATOR STROM THURMOND (D-SC) TO GREENVILLE, S. C., AMERICAN LEGION POST, MAY 17, 1957.

MY FRIENDS:

As patriotic Americans, you fought for your country in time of war. Tonight I want to talk with you about the preservation of our way of life and the principles of government we have come to revere which are now being attacked in many ways.

As your Senator in Washington, I am going to do everything in my power to preserve the principles upon which this nation was founded. There are several matters I want to discuss with you tonight that are vital to continuation of those principles.

First of all, let me say a few words about the tremendous federal budget of $71.8 billion which has been proposed for
the year beginning on JULY 1.

The first reason the budget is so large is because it is necessary for the United States to spend for the largest peace-time military establishment in our history in order to defend ourselves and our allies against world communism.

The costs of all types of programs designed for national security contained in the budget amount to an estimated $45.3 billion. The existence of world communism has forced the United States to spend more for peace-time military defense forces than ever before in history.

If communism did not exist, it would not be necessary for the United States to maintain such large forces. We would not have to build and keep up bases overseas for our Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine
personnel. We would not have to operate on as large a scale even in the United States. Our Reserve programs could be reduced instead of expanded. We would not have to have a peace-time draft of young Americans.

But we must face the facts. World communism does exist and the only language the communists understand is the language of power. If we were to give any signs of weakness, the communists would again begin to expand their control over smaller, weaker nations by exerting military force, where they were unable to use subversion.

We must be prepared and we must let the world know we are prepared by keeping up with modern science in the military field.

At the same time, and particularly
since it is necessary to spend so much to insure our National Security, we must seek to economize whenever and wherever possible. We must reduce all unnecessary expenditures just as we must cut spending and quit expanding domestic programs.

I said there were two reasons for the large budget and that world communism was the first.

The second reason is that some people in the Congress and in the Executive Branch of the Federal Government are willing to spend and borrow, regardless of the consequences. Some of the consequences of past years of spending and borrowing are all too evident now.

In 1932 the public debt of the Federal Government totaled $16 billion. Now it amounts to $275 billion.
What that means is simply this: That the entire national debt incurred from the founding of the republic to 1932 — a period of 145 years — has been multiplied by 17 in the past 25 years.

Perhaps you think the increased national debt is a dangerous and vicious thing. It is, but in the process of incurring the debt, we have obligated ourselves to an even more vicious factor.

More than one tenth of the entire budget, as proposed by the President, consists of an allocation of funds to pay the interest on the national debt. The interest for the next year will be $7.4 billion.

That is the cost of having borrowed and borrowed during years past.

Ten cents out of every dollar spent
next year by the Federal Government will go toward paying the interest on the debt, while only two cents out of every dollar spent will go toward reduction of the debt itself — paying off the principal.

You have heard a great deal of talk about the budget this year / since Congress convened in January. I have no doubt that you have talked some about it yourselves.

Let me make one final point why I believe it vital to this country / for us to make a start this year on reduction of the national debt by first cutting the budget.

If we started reducing the national debt by paying $5 billion per year on it, it would take 55 years to pay off our present obligations, even if we did not have some national emergency which required additional borrowing.
Actually, however, the prospects are that there will be only a very small margin between the cost of the proposed budget for next year and the revenue from taxes to pay those costs.

I advocate cutting the budget now so we can make a start on reduction of the national debt and then try to reduce taxes. I do not see how taxes can be cut until we face up to the problem and cut spending, both overseas and at home.

It will be my purpose to vote for reductions all along the line as the appropriations bills are considered in the Senate. These cuts will have to be made outside of programs which have been established by law and which require certain amounts each year to sustain them.
Where the law requires certain payments for social security, for veterans, for retirement benefits, etc., we cannot cut without going back on the promises made by enactment of the laws/which established those programs. But where American dollars are being sent overseas to raise the economic level of foreign nations, we can cut appropriations/and we must do so.

I hope that the voice of the people has been heard by some of my "spending and borrowing" colleagues, because some of them must be impressed with the seriousness of the budget problem.

Nothing would suit the communists better than to see the United States spend itself into a state of socialism/which would destroy the free enterprise system which has made this country great. I
give you my pledge to do everything in my power/to put us back on the road to sound government.

That brings me to a second matter which I want to discuss.

There is one item proposed in the budget which should be eliminated for the sake of economy/and also for the sake of preserving local control of our schools. The budget contains $325 million for federal aid to school construction in 1958. Under the Administration program, that would mean not only $325 million for 1958, but also the same amount each year for three more years/for a total of $1.5 billion.

Although I would oppose any appropriation for federal aid to public school construction/on the basis of not entering a new spending program at this time, I
would first oppose it on the grounds that it would invade the rights of the people to control their schools at home.

The school construction aid program has been proclaimed by its advocates as an emergency program which will be abandoned at the expiration of the emergency. But the history of federal aid programs shows that once started, they are seldom cut off.

Even more serious is the fact that federal aid is bound to lead to federal control. There is no doubt that the Government could control that which it paid for because there is a Supreme Court decision on that very point. In Wickard v. Filburn, decided in 1942, the Court stated:

"It is hardly lack of due process for government to regulate that which it subsidizes." That simply means that if
the Federal Government helped to build a school, it could also issue regulations concerning use of the school.

The Constitution is the basic law of the land. Through it/certain powers and responsibilities are delegated to the Federal Government by the States/which created it.

Education or the public schools is not mentioned in the Constitution. Therefore, the Federal Government has neither responsibility nor authority in the field of education.

I am proud that South Carolina has looked after her own schools/and the education of all the children of the State, regardless of race. The State has met the responsibility/which goes with the power to provide for and regulate the public schools.
Some States have failed to meet the responsibility in the same way South Carolina has met it. This has given advocates of federal aid the opportunity for which they were looking to promote the bill now pending in the committees of the Senate and House.

But regardless of the excuse they use, the advocates of federal aid to education have no constitutional basis for their efforts. They are trying to establish a program which eventually would lead to control of the public schools.

I am proud of the job South Carolina has done, and I shall exert my efforts to prevent the enactment of this expensive, new and unconstitutional program of federal assistance. Even if the State needed the help, I could not support such a program.
because it would violate the separation of powers of Federal and State governments established in the Constitution.

Another subject I want to discuss with you tonight and one which strikes even more directly at the principles on which our government was established is that of the so-called civil rights bills. Such bills are now pending in both the Senate and House Judiciary Committees.

The advocates of these bills have been doing everything possible to bring enough pressure to bear on the members of Congress to secure passage of these bills. Let me talk for a few moments about what the proposals now contained in S. 83 would do if enacted.

A Civil Rights Commission of six members would be appointed to appraise the
laws and policies of the Federal Government with regard to civil rights. This Commission, which would submit a report and recommendations to the President in two years, would have great power.

It could subpoena witnesses to testify. It could demand the assistance of federal agencies in its investigations and it could set up advisory groups.

The Commission's investigative powers would include: Charges of persons being deprived of their right to vote, reports of illegal voting, accusations of "unwarranted" economic pressures, and studying information on economic, social and legal developments on equal protection under the law.

Part two of the bill would provide for an additional Assistant Attorney
General/who would head a Civil Rights Division in the Department of Justice. At present there is a section to handle such cases, but this would mean the employment of more lawyers by the Justice Department/to snoop into the business of the States in civil rights cases.

Part three of the bill would really destroy the rights of citizens/because that is the section which would provide for the issuance of "preventive" injunctions by federal courts, thus denying trial by jury to our citizens.

It would also permit the Justice Department to start action on behalf of other persons in civil rights cases, but to do so in the name of the United States. This would serve two purposes for the liberals: It would again circumvent the...
right of trial by jury under present law and it would provide for payment of the costs of such cases by the Government. Further, the Federal District Courts would be given jurisdiction in such cases, regardless of remedies provided under State laws or regulations.

Part four of the bill would permit the issuance of "preventive" injunctions in protection of the right to vote, although the bill doesn't explain how anybody can tell when somebody is "about to prevent" somebody else from voting.

These proposals for the enactment of so-called civil rights measures would cut the heart out of home-rule and the police powers which are reserved to the States by the Constitution.
In order to off-set the evil effects of these proposals, I have introduced a bill in the Senate, as co-sponsor with Senators Byrd and Eastland, to guarantee the right of trial by jury. This bill would provide for jury trial in all contempt cases, as guaranteed under present law for persons involved in labor dispute-contempt cases.

The introduction of that bill brought attacks almost immediately from two places: A spokesman for the Justice Department and a liberal Washington newspaper. The Justice Department spokesman devoted an entire speech to his attack on the bill.

He declared that it would defeat the purpose of the Administration's civil rights bills. Here is what he said:
"I should like ... to warn against attempts now being made to emasculate this program by deceptive appeals for the protection of the right to trial by jury."

But I ask you and every other true American, what is deceptive about guaranteeing the right of trial by jury?

However, I am glad the Justice Department spokesman made his position clear: That he is against extending to every citizen the legal right of trial by jury now enjoyed by some citizens.

I am glad that persons involved in labor disputes already have the right of trial by jury in contempt cases because I believe every citizen should have that right. All I want to do is to extend the same right to all citizens.

I cannot understand why anybody would
object to doing that/unless he does not believe in trial by jury for anybody. Regardless of the so-called civil rights bills, the bill Senators Byrd, Eastland and I have introduced/should be approved.

If the civil rights bills come before the Senate, I shall fight against them/in every way I can. We must keep alert every step of the way, if we are to protect and preserve constitutional government.

I believe that practicing economy in government/and preventing the enactment of bad legislation/is an obligation of my oath of office. I shall be true to that oath/to the best of my ability.

END