ADDRESS BY SENATOR STROM THURMOND (D-SC) ON HONORABLE JAMES F. BYRNES IN UNITED STATES SENATE, MARCH , 1956.

JAMES F. BYRNES HAS UNIQUE PLACE IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Mr. President, on January 9 of this year, the distinguished Junior Senator from Kansas/placed in the Record the names of 109 persons/who have served their States as Governor, member of the United States House of Representatives and member of the United States Senate. Since that time I have had the records checked/and find that one of the distinguished gentlemen named/holds a unique place in history. In addition to having served his State as Governor, as United States Representative and as United States Senator, the Honorable James F. Byrnes of South Carolina/has also served on the United States Supreme Court/and as a member of the Cabinet of the President of the United States.

He is the only person in history/who has held the three high offices mentioned by the Senator from Kansas/and who, in addition, has served on the Court and in the Cabinet.

I would like to take this occasion, as the date of his next birthday approaches, to mention some of the highlights in the career of this son of South Carolina/who attained the stature of world statesman.

James Francis Byrnes is of Irish descent, his grandparents having immigrated from the old country. His father, who was a clerk in the city government at Charleston, South Carolina, died a few months before his son was born on May 2, 1879.

At the age of fourteen, James F. Byrnes left school to help earn a living for himself and his mother. He worked in a law office in
Charleston. He learned shorthand and by the time he was twenty, he was making enough money as a stenographer to support his mother.

Young Byrnes entered a competition for the position of court reporter and won the job. He moved to Aiken, South Carolina, and, while working in the court, he studied law and was admitted to the Bar in 1903. For a time, he also owned and edited a weekly newspaper in Aiken.

Mr. Byrnes married Miss Maude Perkins Busch of Aiken on May 2, 1906. She is a charming lady who has been a true helpmate to her distinguished husband.

Mr. Byrnes won his first election by 57 votes in 1908 when he was elected Solicitor of the Second Circuit in South Carolina. After two years, he was elected to Congress from South Carolina's Second District and served in the House of Representatives for 14 years.

During World War I, he was one of five members of the House Deficiency Appropriations Committee which was responsible for recommending most of the appropriations made by the Congress for war activities.

One of the first things he did as a Congressman was to bring about the formation of the House Committee on Roads, from which grew the present Federal roads system.

In 1924 Mr. Byrnes lost the only political contest of the many in which he has participated. He ran for the Senate but lost to Cole L. Blease by a narrow margin.

For the next six years, Mr. Byrnes practiced law in Spartanburg, South Carolina, in the firm of Nichols, Wyche and Byrnes. Mr. Nichols had himself served in Congress and Mr. C. C. Wyche, the other member
of the firm, has been for many years a distinguished Federal District Judge in the Western District of South Carolina.

In 1930, Mr. Byrnes ran against Senator Blease and defeated him. Senator Byrnes was a powerful and respected member of this body for the next 11 years. He rarely made a speech on the floor, but he seldom missed a Committee meeting. When he did make a speech, his words were carefully weighed in high quarters. His power of persuasion in Committees and in the cloakroom was legendary even while he was in the Senate.

At the Democratic Convention in 1932, Senator Byrnes had an important part in the nomination of Franklin D. Roosevelt as the Presidential candidate. In the Senate, he was chief lieutenant for the President. When he did not agree with Roosevelt proposals, he did not hesitate to vote against them.

In July 1941, President Roosevelt appointed Senator Byrnes to the Supreme Court, the third person from South Carolina ever to serve on the Court and the first in nearly a century and a half.

At the ceremony when Associate Justice Byrnes took the oath of office, President Roosevelt said he wished he were Solomon so he could divide Byrnes in two, appointing half of him to the Supreme Court and leaving the other half in the Senate.

But America was soon at war and Justice Byrnes offered himself to President Roosevelt for whatever service he could render his country.

In October 1942, the President called him from the Court to head the Office of Economic Stabilization and to coordinate the war effort.

His responsibilities were increased in 1943 when he was made Director of War Mobilization. In November 1944, the additional responsibilities of reconversion were put under his direction and his
title became Director of War Mobilization and Reconversion. Except for the President, no other official in Government held so much power and responsibility. He was known as and in fact was the Assistant President.

For his meritorious service in these vital offices during World War II, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that Justice Byrnes be awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. The President made the award on August 4, 1945, and read the following citation:

"Mr. James F. Byrnes, as Director of War Mobilization from October, 1942, to March, 1945, discharged duties of great responsibility with outstanding success. Faced with the problem of aiding the Chief Executive in girding the nation for a conflict of unprecedented proportion, he accomplished his task with exceptional skill. He accompanied the Commander-in-Chief to vital conferences, applying his extensive knowledge of inter-Allied problems to their prompt and effective solution. With vast understanding, exceptional ability as an arbiter, unswerving devotion to the national interests and firm determination, Mr. Byrnes performed difficult services (of high importance), making a major contribution to the war effort."

President Truman called him out of retirement to become Secretary of State. He held the office for 562 days and 350 of those days were spent at international conferences. His journeys abroad carried him to London, Paris, Potsdam and Moscow. As a diplomat he traveled approximately 77,000 miles. Other important conferences, including the 1946 meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, were held in this country.

Secretary Byrnes established the United States policy of firmness and patience with Russia in the early post-war period. He gave Germany
hope for the future and helped to bind our relations with that country.

The statement of American policy/which then helped bind Germany to the West / was made by Secretary Byrnes in a speech at Stuttgart on September 6, 1946. He told the German people/that the United States would continue her interest in the affairs of Europe and of the world. In words that Russia could not misunderstand, he declared that "peace and well-being cannot be purchased at the price of the peace and well-being of any other country." He assured the Germans/that American troops would remain in their land/as long as the troops of any other nation remained.

Another principal achievement by Mr. Byrnes as Secretary of State / was the negotiation of the Balkan Treaties.

_Time_ Magazine named Secretary Byrnes "Man of the Year" for 1946. In its cover article in the issue of January 6, 1947, _Time_ said:

"Had 1946 ended as it began, Molotov would have been the year's man...

"Before the year was out, however, the Russian flood was contained. On the dam that held it many men had labored... But the dam's chief builder was James F. Byrnes...who became the firm and patient voice of the United States/in the councils of the world.

"...he managed to get over to the Russians, and the world, that the United States had planted the weight of its power in the path of the Russian advance...."

Mr. Byrnes' resignation as Secretary of State/was effective on January 20, 1947. He again took up active legal practice in the appellate courts, commuting between an office in Washington and one
in South Carolina.

Persuaded that he could render vital service to South Carolina as Governor, he entered the Democratic Primary in 1950 and won nomination over three opponents.

Governor Byrnes had campaigned on two main planks: That he would do everything in his power to improve the public schools of the State and that he would seek extensive improvements of facilities for mental patients.

He was inaugurated Governor in January, 1951, and by the end of the legislative session that spring, Governor Byrnes had succeeded in getting the legislature to enact a broad program of educational improvement. A state-wide school construction program resulted in allocation by the State of $125 million for new schools. (This program has now reached the $200 million mark.)

In his inaugural address, Governor Byrnes called for the unmasking of the Ku Klux Klan. This law was quickly enacted by the General Assembly.

Many other progressive programs were started and completed during the Byrnes administration in South Carolina.

In 1952/Governor Byrnes declared his support for General Eisenhower in the Presidential race. He stated that he did so because he felt he must place "principle above party" and that he believed the General the best qualified candidate for the office.

In 1953/Governor Byrnes served as a member of the United States delegation to the United Nations General Assembly.

Several years ago at the unveiling of a portrait of Mr. Byrnes in the South Carolina Senate, his friend Bernard Baruch spoke. He described Mr. Byrnes as "having joined that little band of immortals
who make the world a finer and more peaceful place...We of South Carolina will always glory in that name."

Since he attained fame, Governor Byrnes has been the recipient of a number of honorary degrees from some of America's great universities. Occasionally, he comments humorously that he has been educated by degrees.

In 1947 he wrote a book, Speaking Frankly, which is an account of his experiences as Secretary of State. He established the James F. Byrnes foundation to administer the proceeds from the sale of the book, and nearly 150 needy orphan students have received grants to prepare them for their chosen careers. The man who walked with kings did not forget those who needed help when he was able to offer that help.

Upon retirement from public office in 1955, Governor and Mrs. Byrnes built a new home in Columbia, the capital of South Carolina. He no longer practices law, but he goes to his private office almost daily to answer mail which comes from friends and strangers in faraway places.

He has the esteem, the high prestige and the great respect and affection of millions, not only in South Carolina but throughout the world.

His career has been unique; his position of prominence is equally unique.

The End