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Radio program of Senator Strom Thurmond recorded for regular weekly broadcast, 1957 April 11

Strom Thurmond

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RADIO PROGRAM OF SENATOR STROM THURMOND RECORDED FOR REGULAR WEEKLY BROADCAST, APRIL 11, 1957.

MY FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS:

First let me express my deep regrets to all those South Carolinians and our neighbors in North Carolina and Georgia who were victims of the tornadoes which struck the area during the past week.

As soon as information reached me about the storms, I sent a member of my staff to the storm area in South Carolina to assist in every way possible, and to report the situation to me. I telegraphed Governor Timmerman and offered to assist in securing the aid of the Civil Defense Administration and other federal agencies which might co-operate in helping to rebuild the storm damage. Under the law the Governor must make the first application.

The Governor replied that he had asked Civil Defense for aid and that help from my office would be appreciated. Since the storm, I have been working with Civil Defense and with appropriate officials at the White House, urging that all possible aid be given promptly.

I am thankful that no lives were lost in South Carolina and offer my sympathy to our sister State of North Carolina for the loss of life there.

Since my last broadcast, two attacks have been launched on the bill which I am sponsoring, with Senators Eastland and Byrd, to guarantee the right of trial by jury.

A Washington newspaper attacked the bill editorially and a spokesman of the Justice Department devoted an entire speech in opposition to the bill.
In view of the fact that the newspaper and the Justice Department both have been strong advocates of so-called civil rights measures now pending in Congress, it was somewhat surprising to find them both in open opposition to my bill.

The Justice Department spokesman stated that the bill to guarantee the right of trial by jury would defeat the purpose of the Administration's civil rights bills. Here are his own words:

"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."

My reply to that charge is a question: What is deceptive about guaranteeing the right of trial by jury? That is the stated purpose of my bill.

However, I am glad the Justice Department has made its position clear in this instance. There is only one conclusion to be drawn from the speech of the Justice Department spokesman.

He is against extending to every citizen a legal right now enjoyed by some citizens: That is the right of trial by jury.

Persons involved in labor dispute cases presently enjoy this right even when the case involves a question of contempt of a court order. If one citizen has the right of trial by jury in contempt cases, -- and I believe they should have that right -- then every citizen should have the same right.

Courts must have the authority to punish contempt when such an act is committed in the presence of the court or when an officer of the court fails to perform his duty. But the question of whether
an order of a court has been violated is entirely another matter. Certainly a jury would be just as fair in its consideration of whether a contempt had been committed as the judge who had issued the order would be.

The Justice Department should consider whether the feelings and emotions of a judge would not be just as likely to get involved in such a case as would the feelings and emotions of a jury.

I fail to see that letting a jury of 12 persons decide whether a contempt has been committed is any departure from accepted principles of justice. The inconsistency of some advocates of the so-called civil rights bills is clearly shown by their attacks on my bill.

Apparently they believe in certain rights for certain people and not the same rights for all the people. I believe a majority of the American people believe in preserving and extending the fundamental right of trial by jury.

The attacks against this bill convince me that I am on the right track and the so-called civil rights advocates are fearful that the people will urge their Representatives and Senators to vote for the bill.

This is Strom Thurmond in Washington. Thank you for listening and this station for making this time available each week.

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