4-18-1957

Radio script of Senator Strom Thurmond for his regular weekly broadcast, for week of April 29, recorded 1957 April 18

Strom Thurmond

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MY FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS:

One of the subjects which has been of most serious concern to me, since I came to the Senate and for years before that, is the subject of federal aid to education.

The bill pending in the House Education Committee at this time would provide 400 million dollars a year in federal funds, each year for five years, to construct school buildings. This would total two billion dollars for five years.

It has been proclaimed by its backers as an "emergency" plan to relieve what has been represented as a dire shortage of school rooms. The impression they wish to give is that once the so-called emergency has passed that federal aid would be stopped.

Anybody who has had any experience with federal aid knows that history does not bear out the claim. Once the foot of federal aid has been thrust into the door of a State, there is seldom any chance to cut it off.

Even more serious is the fact that federal aid is bound to lead to federal control. It is argued that the pending bill is designed to prevent federal control.

Nonetheless, it is true that federal control would result from federal aid to our schools. When the Smith-Hughes Act was passed in 1917 to provide federal aid to vocational education, it was said that no federal control would follow. But today it takes a book of 108 pages to contain all the regulations which must be met by the States to receive the Smith-Hughes funds.
Last year when the Federal Highway Act was passed, it contained a provision which requires the Secretary of Labor to set the wage scales to be paid for work done on construction of the highways. That provision was included despite the fact that work is to be done under contracts let by State Highway Departments.

Many other examples could be mentioned.

You can imagine without any trouble what the result would be of letting the Federal Government get its foot in the door of our public schools at this time. Once it had the excuse to exert control over the schools in any way, it could expand that authority to exert control in any direction.

You don't want the Federal Government using its power to tell you what school your children have to attend and with whom they must attend.

There is no doubt that the Government could control that which it paid for because there is a court decision on the very point. In a case decided by the Supreme Court in 1942, Wickard v. Filburn, the Court stated:

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

I shall fight against any such control of our schools. To fight against control, I must first fight against federal aid so as to keep the Government from having an excuse to seize control of our schools.
Even if all the States needed help to meet their need for funds to build schools, and even if federal control would not follow federal aid, it would be unconstitutional for the Federal Government to provide aid.

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 the Federal Union. Education or the public schools is not mentioned in the Constitution. Therefore, the Federal Government does not have responsibility in the field of education. It does not have power to regulate the public schools. For the Federal Government to hold such power or such responsibility, there would have to be a specific provision in the Constitution. There is none.

What the Constitution does say is that "powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively or to the people."

There are many other reasons the Federal Government should stay out of the field of education. The States are doing a fine job of meeting their needs and wiping out the back-log need of the war years for school rooms.

I shall continue to fight against this attempted federal encroachment on the rights of the people and I am confident it can be prevented.

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

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