7-3-1957

Radio script of Senator Strom Thurmond for his regular weekly broadcast, recorded 1957 July 3

Strom Thurmond

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MY FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS:

This is one of the most trying times in the history of our country for the Southern members of the Senate who must fight against the enactment of the so-called civil rights bills.

We have been holding caucuses to make plans for the extended debate which appears to be forced upon us by the liberals. Debate can start when a motion is made to take up the civil rights bill for consideration. Then, if it should actually be taken up, the bill itself can be debated at length. Each amendment also can be debated to some extent. The best strategy might lead to different use of our time.

It would take a motion by 16 Senators to force the Senate to bring to a vote whether or not to cut off debate. Then the vote on limiting debate — or cloture, as it is called — requires the support of 64 Senators actually to cut off debate and limit speeches by each Senator to one hour.

It is my intention, and the intention of each Southern Senator who has participated in our meetings, to do everything possible to continue debate to the fullest extent. We do not intend to bow to the dictates of the liberals of both parties who want to force their form of so-called civil rights down our throats.

I hope — but have little reason to believe — that by the next time I talk with you on this program, the civil rights issue will have been resolved in favor of the rights of the people and the principles of Constitutional Government.

I have introduced a resolution in the Senate to make known the views of the Congress and the people to officials of the
Government who deal with problems of our Armed Forces overseas. In my opinion, the people want our men in service to be protected by having the right to be tried by our own courts martial when they are charged with committing a crime while in the performance of their duty.

Under the so-called Status of Forces Treaties, when our men are sent to a country, where such agreements are in effect, our military authorities "have the primary right to exercise jurisdiction over" our men "...in relation to..."offences arising out of any act or omission done in the performance of official duty."

However, another provision of the treaties provides that:

"The authorities of the State having the primary right shall give sympathetic consideration to a request from the authorities of the other State for a waiver of its right in cases where that other State considers such waiver to be of particular importance."

That is the point which concerns me. The best illustration of what can happen when the United States waives the primary right to jurisdiction over a member of our Armed Forces is the Girard Case, which is now pending before the Supreme Court. I anticipate that, under the waiver provision, the Court will permit Girard to be turned over to the Japanese for trial.

When this country sends fighting men overseas, the least we can do is to protect the best interests of the men by providing them trial by courts-martial for acts done when they are on duty. When our officials waive the right actually held under the treaties to provide our men with such protection, I believe the Congress should take action to remedy the situation.
My resolution would make clear to the Executive Branch that the Congress expects all of its officials to exercise jurisdiction over our Armed Forces, when a right to such jurisdiction is held under the treaties.

Finally, let me mention the reduction in the Defense Appropriations from the amount sought by the budget request. The Senate approved a bill of $34.5 billion, instead of the $36.1 billion requested, thus keeping our record consistent in having cut every request thus far this year.

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

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