7-18-1957

Radio script of Senator Thurmond for his regular weekly broadcast, recorded 1957 July 18

Strom Thurmond

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MY FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS:

One of the most obnoxious pieces of legislation that has come before the Senate since I came here in 1955 is the so-called civil rights bill. The able leader of our Southern bloc opposing the passage of this bill is the highly respected Senator Richard B. Russell of the State of Georgia. Senator Russell will you tell us the status of this bill at the present?

SENATOR RUSSELL: "Well, Senator Thurmond, as you well know, there are 18 of us who are unalterably opposed to this bill -- 18 out of the 96 Members of the Senate. We are holding frequent meetings, endeavoring to devise plans, if it is possible to do so, to defeat this bill in a battle to the death. Naturally we are also canvassing every possible situation that might enable us to pull any of the teeth out of this bill. We are taking every step that's available to us to try to mitigate it, then we'll take every step that is available to us to try to defeat it. We are endeavoring to measure up to the confidence that the people of our States have placed in us. Our numbers are few, our backs are to the wall, but we have no spirit of surrender. We will fight it out to the last."

SENATOR THURMOND: Well, Senator, I want to thank you very much for that fine statement.

SENATOR RUSSELL: "Well, I want to congratulate and thank you, Senator Thurmond, for the great contribution you have made
in this fight. You have made a magnificent speech and you 
have contributed much to our frequent caucuses and discussions.
I thank you for your fine contribution."

SENATOR THURMOND: Thank you very much and the South is proud of 
your leadership.

I think Senator Russell will agree with me that since the 
debate over the so-called civil rights bill began approximately 
two weeks ago, we have made rather remarkable progress in educating 
the people of the nation on the dangerous provisions contained in 
this obnoxious legislation. Big Northern dailies such as the 
Washington Evening Star, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, 
and many others have now come out against some of the bill's 
provisions. Some of these papers are insisting on inclusions of 
the right to trial by jury and other amendments.

Many persons, including the President of the United States, 
evidently did not realize just what type bill the Attorney General 
and the liberal Democrats were trying to put over on the people. 
This band of integrationists was masquerading this legislation 
under the guise of a right to vote bill. They were successful in 
shoving the bill through the House of Representatives without any 
ameliorating amendments and without arousing the suspicion and 
fear of a majority of the American people.

Since reaching the Senate, however, the fangs of this monstrous 
legislation have been exposed, and we have won new support from 
several quarters for the purpose of yanking its venomous teeth. 
Even some advocates of civil rights legislation, such as Senator 
Anderson of New Mexico, have proposed amendments to knock out some 
of the worst features of the bill. The Aiken-Anderson amendment,
now pending before the Senate, would strike Part III from the bill. This part is the one which was cunningly drawn by the Attorney General for the purpose of giving himself and his successors in office the power to personally force integration of the races in the South. Now that he has been educated to a certain degree on this legislation, the President has stated publicly that he would not favor this type action by the Attorney General.

It would be difficult to predict what success we will have in the Senate in removing the most objectionable features from the bill. I think it would be safe to say, however, that we are giving them the fight of their lives, and that we shall continue to do so.

There has been some talk in the press of compromise, but I do not favor any compromise. These issues are too vital to our people and to the principles of constitutional government to barter away any of them. The people of South Carolina can count on me to work shoulder to shoulder with Senator Russell in fighting this unconstitutional legislation to the full extent of my physical capacity.

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