Radio script of Senator Thurmond for his regular weekly broadcast, recorded 1957 August 1

Strom Thurmond

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MY FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS:

In the Senate we have now completed four weeks of debate on the so-called civil rights bill. There have been many hours of work done off the floor of the Senate for every hour of debate. In fact, the point has been reached where everybody is pretty well worn out from the intensity of the job which we of the South have engaged in to educate the rest of the country as to the dangers in the bill.

Probably you have heard most of the issues and points concerning the bill, so today I want to talk with you about some of the people — the personalities — who have so ably defended the South and put forth the South's position in such a favorable light to the rest of the Nation.

Foremost among the Senators who have debated so skillfully during the fight over the so-called civil rights bill is, of course, Senator Russell of Georgia. He has been the leader of plans and strategy of our group of Southerners who have battled against at every turn of the legislative wheel. His previous experience in similar situations and his unexcelled knowledge of parliamentary procedure and the rules of the Senate have been invaluable to all of us.

In describing the bill in the Senate, Senator Russell declared:

"The bill has, perhaps, more multifarious and far-reaching provisions of a strange nature, unknown ordinarily to the American system of laws, than has any other bill that has
ever been brought before the Senate. Its provisions were shrouded in secrecy. Members of the Senate, very frankly, do not now understand the detailed powers conferred by the bill.

"Only today," Senator Russell continued, "I developed in the course of my study, one new aspect of Part IV which has not come to my attention after the most exhaustive previous study."

Those are strong words of Senator Russell condemning the bill for its deviousness and for its far-reaching effects.

Another of the most active members of the Senate against the bill has been Senator Ervin of North Carolina. During my address on Wednesday against the bill, Senator Ervin engaged in asking me a series of questions to point up the dangers of the measure.

One of his questions was:

"In the judgment of the Senator from South Carolina, will not the constitutional liberty of Americans die at the precise moment when Congress passes a law which will enable a judge to prevent a jury from acquitting a defendant in any kind of case?"

And my answer was "I am certainly of that opinion...The right to trial by jury is one of the great bulwarks of the democracy of this Nation. The right to trial by jury is guaranteed in the Constitution. It is further assured in the Bill of Rights. It is a right which every American has heretofore held, and to which he is entitled. It would be a sad day in this country if that right were to be taken away from American citizens."

At the beginning of my address, I stated that denial of the right of trial by jury in election cases "would place a mortgage on the freedom of every citizen, marked payable on demand
at election time to the Attorney General of the United States."

The friendly questions asked of me by Senators Ervin, Sparkman, Talmadge, Smathers, Gore and Yarborough/all helped to bring out points of importance against the so-called civil rights bill.

All of these men have helped make it possible for the country to receive a full description of the bill's dangers.

Senators who have scored very effectively in the debate, in addition to those I have just mentioned, include Senators Byrd, Hill, McClellan, and Stennis. In many ways and at all hours of the day and night, all of these men, and others too, have devoted themselves to a searching analysis of the bill.

Also, I would mention Senator Lyndon Johnson of Texas, the majority leader, who has moved effectively behind the scenes in helping to strike Part III and to provide jury trials, especially to ameliorate several points which were in the original bill. I don't know what his final position will be on the bill, but he has assisted in modifying the bill favorably to the South.

I wish it were possible to describe all the work which has gone into the battle against this bill, but time will not permit.

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

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