
MY FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS:

Believing that free government in the United States is in grave danger, I have introduced in the Senate a Resolution calling for the establishment of a Commission on Federal and State Jurisdiction.

In general, this commission would have the task of examining the system of checks and balances in government which, up to now, has been the principal guarantee of our heritage of freedom.

More precisely, the Commission would be empowered to study two distinct but interlocking problems. One is the growing centralization of federal power at the expense of the rights and integrity of the 48 states. The other is the usurpation of power by one of the three branches of the federal government -- judicial, legislative and executive -- at the expense of the other branches.

I say these problems are interlocking because they both arise from the same thing -- the tendency to put short-term expediency ahead of principles of government that are perpetually sound.

In my address on the Senate floor, I referred to the fact that we have had a number of other official and semi-official investigations of the Federal-State problem. For example, we have the Joint Federal-State Action Committee and the Commission
on Intergovernmental Relations—both set up at the instigation of the Eisenhower administration.

There is an important difference between the function of these valuable agencies and the one I am advocating.

These other agencies approach the question of Federal-State jurisdiction from the stand-point of short-term expediency. They suggest that our government would make a more efficient use of its tax money if some of the work being done by the federal government were transferred back to the states.

I too am interested in governmental efficiency.

But I am also convinced that this is the wrong approach to the problem, because it overlooks the Constitution. It assumes that the constitutional issue has already been settled against the states, and that their whole future depends on administrative policy and political decisions made in Washington.

I propose to initiate a study of our government in the light of the Constitution. It is the foundation stone of our government, and one that has served us well. If the people of the United States decide that the Constitution should be changed, there is a constitutional way to change it.

In addition to marking the constitutional line between Federal and State powers, the Commission would use the same guide for surveying the proper boundaries between the branches of the federal government.

It should not be necessary for me to point out that the judicial branch—headed by the Supreme Court—and the
executive branch — led by the President — have taken over powers that should be exercised by Congress alone.

Some will say that I am attempting to turn back the clock. If restoring Constitutional government to the United States is turning back the clock, I cheerfully plead guilty.

Last June, you will remember, Nikita Khrushchev predicted that the United States, in a generation or two, would be a twin sister of the Soviet Union.

He did not predict that this would come about through war, ladies and gentlemen. He predicted that America would become a socialist state by consent of its own citizens.

I will be back next week to report on the progress of other legislation now pending before the Congress.

This is Strom Thurmond in Washington.

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