Press release from the office of Senator Strom Thurmond on speech given at the annual convention of the Hardwood Plywood Institute, 1959 February 19

Strom Thurmond

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 19 -- Senator Strom Thurmond (D-SC) today advocated a strong national defense posture and a sound fiscal policy "to defend ourselves from both armed attack and bankruptcy." Both an adequate defense and the elimination of deficit spending can be obtained, he said, by increasing defense expenditures in three areas and by sharply reducing non-defense spending in several areas.

These remarks were made by the Armed Services Committee member in a speech prepared for delivery before the annual convention of the Hardwood Plywood Institute.

Senator Thurmond said the Administration has requested the "bare minimum" for an adequate defense force, but he proposed a "margin of safety against the probability of human error, or even the unknown of our enemies' strength, in this area on which our very survival depends." He called for additional defense funds for the following purposes:

(1) to insure the ability of the Strategic Air Command to maintain at least a reasonable portion of its force on constant air alert so a surprise attack would not annihilate our retaliatory striking force; (2) speed up production of second generation missiles, such as the ICBM's, the intermediate range polaris system, and the anti-missile missiles; (3) to provide enough personnel, modernized equipment, and airlift capabilities for our ground forces to enable them to deal effectively with the "aggression of limited aims."

In urging a balanced budget, the Senator said:

"Spending can be cut without injury to our defense posture by reducing such items, among others, as foreign aid, public housing and urban renewal, by declining to enter the fields of community facilities and area redevelopment with Federal aid, and by rejecting any increase in Federal aid to education. Even desirable programs should be postponed until Federal expenditures can be reduced well within our income."
On the subject of a sound fiscal policy, Senator Thurmond expressed the fear that the communists would accomplish their goal of conquest without firing a shot if "we continue our irresponsible fiscal policy."

"This truly is our greatest danger," he said, "for while our people, in and out of public office, are aware of the danger of armed attack, we are not nearly so unanimous in our awareness of the threat of internal collapse from government spending and the resulting inflation."

He then cited facts and figures to show the enormity of the National debt, the wave of unbalanced budgets in recent years, and the increased cost of living.

The Senator concluded his remarks with an appeal for the "solid support of the American public" for his proposals. He said both the national defense and the curtailment of non-defense spending are matters that must be put above partisan politics because of the "dreadful consequences."

END