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Remarks of Senator Harry F. Byrd (D-VA) and Admiral Lewis L. Strauss at the George Washington Dinner of the American Good Government Society, 1959 May 30

Strom Thurmond

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SENATOR BYRD:

Mr. Chairman, my friends, I feel very much honored by the privilege tonight of presenting my very dear friend, Lewis L. Strauss, the George Washington Award tendered to him by the American Good Government Society.

I know of few men in our history who have given a more dedicated and useful public service. He deserves in the highest measure the tribute we pay him tonight.

Among his many public assignments, Lewis Strauss was Secretary to Herbert Hoover in 1917-19 as United States Food Administrator. He then served as Chairman of the Commission for the Relief to Belgium. Mr. Hoover, himself, recently described Lewis Strauss to me as one of the ablest, most reliable and thoroughly honest public officials with whom he had ever come in contact. Lewis Strauss entered the Naval Reserve in 1926. He was on continuous active duty during World War II and was the first rear Admiral in the Naval Reserve to be appointed by President Roosevelt.

President Truman appointed him to the first Atomic Energy Commission in 1946 and there he served with great distinction until 1950. Then President Eisenhower appointed him Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, and he served from 1953 to 1958. His service on the Atomic Energy Commission was of enormous importance as it was during that period that policies relating to the use of atomic energy were formulated.
President Eisenhower appointed him Secretary of Commerce on October the 24th, 1958. For the sake of brevity, I have omitted many other public assignments in which he has served since he began his public career in 1917. So, the man we honor tonight has served under and had the confidence of four Presidents -- two Democrats and two Republicans -- in positions of immense importance. I dare say that no man living has such a record.

Knowing Lewis Strauss as I have for many years, I can describe him as a man of intense patriotism, able and conscientious, and whose aim in life is to serve his country well, and this he has done.

Lewis, if you will please rise. Let me read to you sir, this "Resolution of Tribute and Honor."

Lewis L. Strauss

"Patriot and Benefactor of Mankind, Banker and Practical Visionary, has devoted more than twenty years to the Service of the People of the United States -- as Private Citizen, in the Navy Department and with the Atomic Energy Commission.

"From his gifted imagination and brilliant Versatility came a better Navy Inspection Service, the morale-building Civilian "E" Awards, advanced Weapons and Coordinated Defense Procurement, -- all of inestimable value in winning the War. His early interest in Atomic Science prepared him for his Preeminent part in developing the Hydrogen Bomb, initiating the Detection System for Atomic Explosions, and in making Peaceful Uses of the Atom come true.
"Steeped in the Traditions of Virginia and the American Heritage, Admiral Strauss guards them vigilantly. Through his wisdom, foresight and energy he has made his Career a living symbol of Love of Country, and the Blessings of Liberty -- God Given Rights and Earned Privileges."

I congratulate you.

ADMIRAL STRAUSS:

Thank you, Senator Byrd, I have been a probationary bureaucrat for so long the capacity to blush has forsaken men.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished guests, and friends, it must need be a man of granite to feel other than deeply moved by this Award, to fail to respond with a whole heart to the graciousness of the distinguished and well-loved Senator from Virginia. Indeed, Senator Byrd has displayed that myopia of friendship which has caused him to see only the virtues and to overlook the obvious faults. I am grateful to you, the members of this organization, for the Award. I thank him and I thank you.

It never occurred to me on the occasions that I have attended these convocations in past years that ever I would be so honored by you as were my old chief, Herbert Hoover; the friend of my youth, Robert Taft; and the great Senator who presented this award to me.

I have noticed on each such evening how the two men singled out for your accolade were happy to be mentioned together, and it is with particular happiness and also with great pride that I find myself sharing this evening with so outstanding an exponent
of good government, of honor, of devotion to public service as the great Senator from Arkansas, John McClellan.

There, ladies and gentlemen, is a statesman cast in the mold of the Founding Fathers, sworn to the task of liberating the American working man from the rule of racketeers and gangsters. He is an example of good government in action.

I would also pay tribute to Senator Goldwater for one of the most eloquent and inspiring and moving addresses I have ever heard. I would pay tribute to the purposes of this distinguished society and its good name.

To the pessimist or the cynic, the simple words, good government, may connote a pale and negative virtue. The truth is otherwise, Good government is a positive and incandescent force, the active righteousness and justice of a people animated by moral law and illuminating the brightest figures in our history.

George Washington, in that address of prophetic and fatherly concern for our future, with which he closed his great career, warned us that the propitious smiles of heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which heaven itself has ordained. They, my friends, are the essence of good government. Long may it light and guide the people of the United States. Thank you again.

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