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Address by Senator Strom Thurmond (D-SC) at Winthrop College, Rock Hill, South Carolina, 1960 May 28

Strom Thurmond

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It is a real pleasure for me to be on the Winthrop campus again, and an honor to have the privilege of addressing this distinguished assemblage. Winthrop stands as a shining light in the educational field throughout the Nation, and associations with the college provide new inspirations to all who take pride in the accomplishments of our State.

Winthrop is uniquely blessed with the public-spirited and self-sacrificing group of individuals who serve as trustees. Their deliberations and sound directions contribute immeasurably to Winthrop and, thereby, South Carolina's, well-being. An example of the wisdom exercised by the trustees recently is the securing of the services of the able and dedicated chief executive officer of the college, Dr. Charles S. Davis, who comes to Winthrop with such an outstanding record. I predict that under his outstanding leadership Winthrop will continue to grow and progress in meeting the needs of education for women.

I would also like to commend the loyal alumnae of Winthrop for their continuing interest in the college and its work. Their activities and interest have contributed much to Winthrop's success. They are fortunate in having such an efficient and enthusiastic alumnae secretary as Miss Eleanor Foxworth. Particularly commendable have been their efforts, through their honor scholarship program, to secure better students for Winthrop. I am sure that their efforts with scholarships will be even more rewarding in the future.

Rock Hill was fortunate in having Winthrop move to this city. The college is a real cultural asset to the community, and I am sure that this is recognized by the citizens of Rock Hill, and, indeed, their recognition is evidenced by the scholarships provided by businessmen in the community.
South Carolinians are rightfully proud of such institutions as Winthrop, and our recollection of that pride is not stimulated only on the occasions when we visit or read of Winthrop and its accomplishments. Those of us who travel around the country and the world are reminded by a comparison with what we see and observe elsewhere, and are therefore probably even more conscious of the contributions than those who have the privilege of remaining close to this activity.

A short while ago, I had occasion to visit San Francisco, California, to attend a Military Conference. At the same time, the House Committee on Un-American Activities was holding hearings in that city on Communist activities in the United States. During a recess in the conference I was attending, I visited the hearings and witnessed a demonstration against the committee by a mob, composed in large part of students from nearby colleges. The police had to use fire hoses and night sticks to disperse the rioting crowd, and sixty-four persons were arrested. There can be no question but that the riot was Communist inspired and led.

As I witnessed that deplorable incident, I could not help but contrast these students with those of our own South Carolina colleges, and my feelings of shame, regret and embarrassment at the attitude and actions of these students were mixed with pride that no such attitude has developed among the students in South Carolina.

All too often, we, as a people, who have enjoyed the benefits of a society where the power of government rests ultimately in the people themselves, complacently assume that the ultimate and complete solution to the problems of any country is simply to place the power in the hands of the people and that, invariably, the people will
govern themselves well. The lessons of history belie such a broad and dogmatic assumption. At our own Constitutional convention, many leaders of the revolution, and even delegates to the convention, harbored doubts as to the ability of any people, as a whole, to wisely govern themselves. Benjamin Franklin, for instance, doubted the ability of the American people to preserve their liberty and expressed his doubt in answer to a query as to whether a Republic or a Monarchy had been proposed by the Constitutional convention, when he said, "A Republic, if you can keep it."

The most persuasive advocate of a people's ability to regulate their own society was Thomas Jefferson. It was he, more than any other, who convinced the delegates to the Constitutional convention of the wisdom of vesting the power of government in the people themselves. Jefferson's persuasiveness stemmed from conviction, and his personal conviction was based on the premise that all of the people could and would be educated. During his life, Jefferson demonstrated his belief that the source of the public's ability to govern wisely lay in education. Not only was Jefferson founder and first president of the University of Virginia, but he was also a key figure in the establishment of the United States Military Academy. He realized that the seeds of liberty and justice could never survive in narrow minds, and that the success of our "experiment in democracy" depended on the education of the populace.

The history of our republic has proved that it is possible for an educated and informed people to successfully chart their own course. Great strides toward the fulfillment of Jefferson's vision of a literate, knowledgeable and informed public have been made, and possibly the greatest single stride of all was the realization
of the necessity of educating the women of our country. It has been said that if you educate a man, you educate one individual; but if you educate a woman, you educate a family. Incidentally, it is interesting to note that interest in the education of women in this country paralleled in time the movement for women's suffrage, which culminated with the adoption of the XIX Amendment to the Constitution in 1920. Our entire society has been the beneficiary of the efforts of women's educational institutions.

To my mind, Winthrop College stands among the foremost in the land among women's colleges in contributions to our free society. My judgment is not based on my close ties with Winthrop, of which I have many. My wife and three sisters graduated from Winthrop. For two years I served as a trustee; and while in the State legislature, I authored the bills for the construction of the auditorium, the home economics building and the nursery. Winthrop graduates have assisted me as secretaries during the period I was Governor and since I have been in the Senate. Although these ties have not colored my judgment, they have undoubtedly increased my interest in this institution and the work it is doing, and have focused my attention on the splendid job that is being accomplished.

From its early beginning in 1886 as a Training School for Teachers, operating on a meager annual grant from the Peabody Educational Fund, Winthrop has made great strides in fulfilling the need for a broad educational base for the women in South Carolina and neighboring states. Originally, financial assistance from the State of South Carolina was based on a concept of Winthrop as an institution to provide "industrial education" for girls. Although
the word "industrial" at that time had a broader meaning than the common usage of the word connotates today, the original advocates of state assistance only had in mind a school for the purpose of training women to make a living. Experience quickly proved that this concept was too narrow. In 1895 the Prospectus of Winthrop Normal and Industrial College - which was then located in Columbia, but the same year moved to Rock Hill - expressed a more comprehensive goal for the yet infant college. This Prospectus stated:

"The turning out of mere workwomen, ignorant of everything except the narrow craft by which they earn their living, with a manual dexterity reduced to muscular habit, is not to be thought of. The fact that there is an age in which intelligence and judgment must guide the hand in order that the resulting labor may be properly remunerative would be sufficient reason for this policy, if there are none better. But there are higher considerations than that of dollars and cents which govern this matter. The State in such an undertaking as this owes it to herself and to all concerned to make the best womanhood possible. To this end the cultured mind must be joined to the skillful hand, both to be dominated by the promptings of a good heart. This institution (Winthrop) is to be for the best education of the hand, the head and the heart of South Carolina's young womanhood."

As so often is the case, a change in name to reflect the change in scope and purpose was belated, and did not follow until 1920 when "Winthrop Normal and Industrial College" became "Winthrop College, the South Carolina College for Women." The tardiness of
the change in name is emphasized by the fact that as early as 1907, graduates of Winthrop were recognized for admission to Columbia University for full post-graduate study, and Winthrop's diploma became accepted as a life license to teach in the States of California and New York.

In the intervening years many formal recognitions of the successful efforts of Winthrop have been made. Even greater proof of Winthrop's success, however, lies in the accomplishments of its graduates. A great portion of the credit for the cultural and economic advancements so noticeable in our State today are due in no small part to the contributions of Winthrop's graduates as teachers, home demonstration agents, secretaries, housewives, and in every phase of business and social life throughout the State of South Carolina. No greater monument to the success of this institution could be conceived than already exists in the progress of South Carolina as a result of Winthrop training.

As many, and as impressive, as are the accomplishments of Winthrop, they are not grounds for complacency. Winthrop's goal lies in the future—not in the past. Past accomplishments are most important now as a stock of experience on which the needs of today and the future may be grafted. The people of South Carolina must join—no, must lead—the people of the other 49 States in acquiring and maintaining the truly educated status of being able not only to progress economically, but also to chart a course of economic, social and political advancement that is consistent with the preservation of a free and self-governing society.
This is not an easy task. False prophets are abroad in the land, and unlike the false Biblical prophets, they do not rely on word of mouth alone to spread their deception. They are masters of propaganda, proficient at both the soft and hard sell, and experienced in the perversion of mass communication media for their own sinister purposes. Against their campaign, the untrained mind cannot prevail. Only the educated can separate the grain of truth from the chaff of deception to arrive at a rational judgment necessary as a basis of actions that can secure our liberty.

A firm and uncompromising set of values, which cannot be confused, is the most priceless asset with which any individual can be equipped to deal with all of life's problems. Our heritage has determined that Americans are a sympathetic and charitable people. Those who would subvert our liberty seek to use this noble and admirable characteristic to lead us down the road of socialism, by hiding their ultimate goal under the cloak of humanitarianism. Behind many noble slogans and some of the most appealing causes, lie the seeds of absolute State authority.

Our history of economic progress has served to whet our appetite to the extent that it approaches the extent of our imaginations. Now that we have "a chicken in every pot", we have apparently set our goal on "two cars and a boat in every garage". It is commendable that we have reached a level of economic prosperity which inspires a complete lack of patience with want, whether for necessities or luxuries. We reached this goal primarily, however, through individual effort; and the part not acquired by individual effort has been bought on credit, with a down payment of surrendered freedom. There is no such thing as "something for nothing", and
there is no short cut to the abolition of want, either in this country or the world. Proposals to substitute governmental actions for private effort must be considered in terms of the price to be paid, and the projected accomplishments viewed with a clear and critical eye. Economic security and tranquility know no ultimate source but the individual.

The most valuable attributes which are inspired by an adequate education are self-reliance and self-confidence, and it is these attributes which are most formidable in resisting the contagion of oppressive doctrines and ideologies, whether they originate domestically or on foreign soil. Every part of the educational process plays a part in the development of the qualities of character and mind which insure the continuance of a successfully self-governed society. For instance, thorough training in the ability to perform competently a task which is useful, needed and desired by society does more than provide the mere means of earning a livelihood. Such training also instills in the recipient a bulwark against the insecurity which so often prevails against reason to a narrow or short-range outlook on problems that affect not only the individual, but his fellow citizens as well. The ability to perform the necessary tasks to earn a living, however, can never be considered an education in itself. In the process of teaching a trade or profession, the educational curriculum must be so administered as to train the mind of the individual both in sound principles of private and public conduct, and the ability to apply those principles to the solution of practical every-day problems.
One of the most essential tasks included in a sound educational program is the teaching of mental discipline, for in its broader aspects, mental discipline is synonymous with education. I cannot help but feel that a difference in degree of mental discipline is the quality which distinguishes the students of our South Carolina colleges from students such as those whose demonstrations I witnessed in San Francisco.

The feasibility of self-government, and thereby of educational systems and institutions, is now on trial as never before since our country embarked on the rough sea of popular rule. From a national standpoint, we appear to be on the brink of substituting a preoccupation with economic security for our traditional jealousy of individual independence. This trend is apparent in many of the domestic policies which have invaded our national government.

The most glaring example of the policies to which I refer lies in the field of fiscal affairs. We have spent ourselves into a formal debt in excess of $290 billion. I refer to this as our formal debt, for this represents funds already spent over and above receipts. There is another and larger debt in the form of commitments of future income, which, when added to the formal debt, totals more than $750 billion. Only by comparison can we appreciate this enormous mortgage.

Our ever increasing debt, which we have incurred through the national government, is more than 1½ times the total of our annual gross national product, and it stands as an obligation over and above our normal expenditures, which themselves have reached the fantastic level of approximately $80 billion a year. The trend of fiscal irresponsibility is also graphically illustrated by the fact that during the first 150 years of our country's existence--those
years between 1787 and 1937—the total expenditures of the national government were only $157 billion; while in the last two fiscal years alone, these expenditures were exceeded by $2 billion, for in fiscal 1959 and 1960, expenditures totaled $159 billion. Let us not deceive ourselves that our debt through the national government has accumulated solely as a result of providing the necessities for defense against a foreign aggressor. Such is not the case. For instance, in the fiscal year of 1959 defense expenditures were down $4.3 billion from the Korean War year of 1953, while non-defense expenditures in the same period were up $9.2 billion. There is no alternative to the conclusion that the continuous increase in our debt through the national government is an attempt to do for ourselves, through the hand of the public, what we consider ourselves incapable of performing on an individual basis.

Mark Twain, for all his cynicism, had not only a gift for clear expression of ideas, but on occasion also had a penetrating insight into the qualities of human nature which determine the course of our political path. It was his conception that each person had two sets of morals—one, private morals; the other, public morals. It was the judgment of Twain’s experience that a man of impeccable morals, insofar as his own private conduct was concerned, would condone and advocate, without the slightest twinge of conscience, actions by the public through the instrument of government that he could never accept as conscionable for individual behavior. To no situation does Mark Twain’s analysis apply more conclusively than in the matter of our fiscal approach to life. As individuals we have from the experience of ourselves and others comprehended clearly the dire consequences of living
beyond our means. Indeed, we hasten to condemn it in our neighbor. Pursuit of fiscal irresponsibility by the individual is usually quickly, and always certainly, punished by both the economic and social consequences which inevitably follow. Fiscal irresponsibility is quite obviously not a course of conduct that is approved by society for the individual. On the other hand, the American public, or at least a very substantial portion of it, seems to find no great or serious fault with pursuing a course of fiscal irresponsibility as a group, in the name of the national government.

Our fiscal dilemma is only one facet of the trend. For each additional dollar spent, the spending agency must have a new or increased authority or power. Since the people themselves are the source of the residual power in our form of government, each increase in expenditures also represents a surrender of additional power and authority by the individual over his own life and the conduct of society.

What then is the cause for this double standard? The cause can only lie in either our inability or our unwillingness to apply the principles which we know to be reliable on an individual basis to public conduct.

To reverse this trend, our youth must be educated to appreciate their responsibility to apply the same moral code to the public or governmental actions that their experience and reasoning dictate for their own individual conduct. In the final analysis, our government is no more than a group of individuals acting in concert. It can provide no service nor call upon any resource that does not originate with the individual. The indebtedness of the government is our individual indebtedness. The responsibilities of government are responsibilities that we individually have shunted from our
own shoulders. The powers of the government are powers that we ourselves surrendered. The government holds no security for us that we cannot provide for ourselves as individuals.

It is imperative, therefore, that our young people be educated not only to earn a livelihood, but for the broader purpose of instilling the self-reliance and the self-confidence that will enable them to rely on their own initiative and efforts for their well being and security rather than on the government; and also for the purpose of instilling the mental discipline which is a prerequisite for sound judgment and action to implement a policy of self-determination.

Our educational institutions have the additional responsibility of equipping the future generations to withstand the pressures which exist from international antagonisms and conflicts, for there is no relaxation apparent in the foreseeable future. The fallacies of weakness and appeasement, so obvious from the study of history, must be impressed indelibly on the minds of our young people. Neither can our educational institutions overlook their responsibility to foster and promote in their charges a love and appreciation of liberty, which will in turn promote a staunch and vigilant defense against its encroachment.

Faint hearts will never win in our conflict with the evil forces of Communism. Communism itself is far more than an impractical and tyrannical form of government. It is an idea, or more,--an ideology--which like a parasite must spread to new sources on which to feed or it will perish. Co-existence, which presupposes containment of Communism, can never be willingly accepted by the directors of its adherents, for such a course would be suicidal. We must, therefore, expect a continuation of the challenge to our
liberty which Communism imposes. If we maintain our defenses at a level sufficient to insure our ability to annihilate the forces of Communism in one bold stroke, and at the same time exhibit to the world a firm resolve to take whatever steps are necessary to protect our liberty, then Communist aggression is unlikely to take the form of armed conflict. Any form of appeasement, whether to socialism from within or to aggression from without, will surely precipitate our downfall. Our moral resolve, which is just as essential to the resistance of Communism, as are our armed forces, can find no other source than the self-reliance and the self-confidence in each of us individually.

I have every confidence that Winthrop as an institution will fulfill its responsibility in educating the youth of our State in the future as it has done in the past, and I am just as confident that Winthrop will rise to the challenge of providing the tools for the installation and maintenance of the self-confidence, mental discipline and love of liberty that is essential to the continuation of our self-governed society.

We, the friends and alumnae of Winthrop College, have a part to play in the accomplishment of this goal. We should not utilize the fact that Winthrop is a State school as a pretext for shunning our individual responsibility in assisting this institution in its mission.

Through the various scholarship funds, we, as individuals, can assist Winthrop in including a greater portion of our people in its program of instruction by contributions from our individual resources. By the same means, we can assist in teaching by example the duty of acceptance of responsibility by the individual, and the results that
can be obtained from individual action. In this way we can do our part in proving that self-government, through education, is not only practical and feasible, but the only means by which man may realize the full potential of his destiny.

- END -