Awake And Accomplish

ADDRESS OF

J. Strom Thurmond

GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA

BEFORE THE THIRTY-SEVENTH CONVENTION

OF THE

National Rivers and Harbors Congress

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

First, I want to thank Senator John L. McClellan for his cordial invitation which makes it possible for me to be here today and take part in the discussion and deliberations of the 37th Convention of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress of the United States.

Let me extend my congratulations for the years of patriotic service rendered by members of this National Rivers and Harbors Congress in keeping alive the interest of the people of the Nation in one of our greatest natural resources, our rivers and harbors of the United States.

The first essential of the continued progress of the Nation is the utilization, improvement and expansion of the water resources with which our Country has been so richly blessed by the Divine Creator. While much has been accomplished along this line, in our development from the earliest colonial days to the present time, yet we should be constantly mindful that our progress has been made over the stubborn opposition of those who wished to exploit, for their own enrichment, the streams of the Nation. Our rivers and harbors belong to all of the people, and our laws have at all times protected the rights of the public as a whole, and not of any special group, in the navigable waterways afforded by the great drainage systems of our Country. Progress in every worthwhile activity has always been made by overcoming opposition. We should not now be discouraged by the strength of the opposition, even though it be deeply entrenched behind the bulwarks of wealth and private self-interest.

The growth and expansion of this, the greatest organized government in the world, have been inseparably connected with the utilization of our great blessings in magnificent streams flowing across the Nation and making accessible even the remotest section. Although it is known to every high school graduate in the Nation, it is always interesting to trace the growth of civilization in America by remembering that the streams made possible the spread of settlements from the ports and harbors of one ocean to the ports and
harbors of the other. Although the early settlers faced a wilderness in which other means of transportation were non-existent, they had at hand the most economical method of transportation ever devised, by sending their ships in and along the natural water courses which drained the mountain ranges and vast plains.

Many years before he became President, General Washington rendered valuable assistance to the people of our State in their efforts to expand the use of the natural water courses. Not only was the Father of our Country "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his fellow countrymen", but he was also first to visualize the vast importance of developing the waterways of this Nation.

In all that has been written about George Washington, biographers, almost without exception, have failed to stress the interest of the Father of our Country in the proper development of its water courses, and it would be well for this National Rivers and Harbors Congress, through its proper committee, to cause to be compiled the many things which the first President did for the expansion of inland navigation.

In 1876 the South Carolina Legislature, realizing that the great interior of the State could not be developed without expanding the use of the streams, passed an Act incorporating "The Company For The Inland Navigation From Santee to Cooper River". The first directors of that Company included many of the great figures in the early life of the State and Nation, among them Governor William Moultrie, John Rutledge, Generals Pinckney, Sumter and Marion, the Burkes, Grimkes, Draytons, Mitchell's, Laurenson and many others active in the Nation's early history. Governor Moultrie called upon his old friend General Washington to assist the Company in securing an engineer to construct a canal from the Santee River to the Cooper River so that the Port of Charleston might be available to all the people of South Carolina. On May 25, 1786, from Mount Vernon, General Washington wrote Governor Moultrie, stating that he had communicated with the Marquis de Lafayette and had an answer from the Marquis recommending a road and bridge engineer who could be secured in France, and suggesting that Thomas Jefferson could assist with the French Government in securing a proper engineer for an estimated salary of 500 guineas per year. In this letter General Washington also said:

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"It gives me pleasure to find a spirit for inland navigation prevailing so generally. No country is more capable of improvements in this way than our own; none, which will be more benefited by them and to begin well, as you observe, is all in all. Error in the commencement will not only be productive of unnecessary expense but what is still worse of discouragements."

Let this Congress and the Nation take seriously to heart now the words of the Father of our Country when he said, "No country is more capable of improvements in this way than our own; none, which will be more benefited by them . . .". In this address today, I cannot give you any greater message than the words just quoted from General Washington, before he became the first President of the Nation.

The Santee-Cooper Canal was constructed and went into service in the year 1800. As a vital link between the Santee and Cooper Rivers, it connected inland South Carolina with Charleston's magnificent harbor through the year 1850. Nearly a century later, under the leadership of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, that great believer in and exponent of the development and conservation of our natural resources, there was started in the State of South Carolina, with federal assistance, the construction of the Santee-Cooper Hydro-Electric and Navigation Project. This project is now substantially complete, making an inland waterway of 12 feet minimum depth from the Port of Charleston for a distance of more than 100 miles inland.

It is historically natural, therefore, that the people of my own State should be vitally interested in the development of our harbors and waterways; and even now, South Carolina, in common with many other seaboard States, is engaged in a public program of harbor development, with which, eventually, we hope to integrate sound and beneficial improvement of the streams which traverse the State, as arteries for the transportation of raw materials and manufactured products.

I am informed that during the war year 1944, the inland waterways of the United States carried, exclusive of the traffic on the Great Lakes, over 31,000,000,000 ton-miles. Had these waterways not been available to add their measure of capacity to the entire transportation system of the United States, it is probable that the war would have lasted much longer than it did. These water-
ways are the through routes. They are the framework. I will mention the bareness of that framework again in the course of my talk.

Transportation costs enter into our life and our work from every angle. The produce that is raised on the farms must be brought to market. The raw materials must be brought to the factory and the mill. The manufactured articles that are constructed in our manufacturing centers must be brought to the consumer.

Starting with the raw materials and ending with the finished article, transportation enters into every step of producing, gathering, manufacturing, selling and distributing. A fifth of all of our national investment, so I am told, is in transportation facilities. Therefore, it behooves us, as a Nation, to improve and to utilize those means of transportation which will reduce the cost of our products so that they may be within the reach of the average citizen, so that our industries may find world markets on a competitive basis, and so that our national economy may grow and develop as a result of the availability of low-cost transportation.

It is interesting to note that the 19 largest cities in the United States, and 66 out of the 92 cities that had more than 100,000 population under the 1940 census, are located on the shores of navigable channels improved by the United States Government. It is worthy of our consideration that much of our production is centered within the confines, or industrial areas, of these large communities.

We know that the effectiveness of our bombing in Europe during the last war was considerably increased on account of manufacturing centers being concentrated in comparatively small areas instead of spread over the entire country.

Considering these two facts, one that manufacturing centers of necessity are established on navigable waters, the other that in this atomic era it is essential that manufacturing centers be spread over a greater area, it is obvious that the present bare framework of our existing waterways must be completed forthwith, and that the feeders be provided as quickly as possible. In this way the benefits of water transportation will be extended, and new areas opened to manufacturing and to expansion of agricultural activities.

In this connection, I would like to point to two examples which are known to me, and which are vivid in my mind. First, the City of Columbia, South Carolina, the capital city of the State which
I have the honor to represent as Governor, lies on a waterway which is navigable in law but its navigability is barely established in fact. The United States has authorized a navigable depth of four feet for the Congaree River, which is not sufficient to fully develop modern navigation. This great river joins the Wateree and there forms the Santee, and, by reason of the diversion of its water into the Cooper River through the Santee-Cooper Hydro-Electric and Navigation Project, which I have referred to, it enters the ocean at the magnificent seaport city of Charleston. The stream is one of the larger ones of the Nation and discharges more fresh water directly into the Atlantic Ocean than any stream in the United States south of the St. Lawrence.

It is interesting to note that an enterprising firm of contractors is now definitely proving the value of navigation on this great river system by using Landing Craft Tanks, commonly known as LCT's, bought from war surplus property of the Government, for the transportation of rock for a large riprapping contract for the Santee-Cooper Project. These LCT's draw a maximum of only four feet of water, and it is believed that, with assistance of Army Engineers in removing snags from the Congaree River, this type of craft can be operated most economically. It was my pleasure to inspect two of these boats, and it is my belief that the four-foot authorized depth, if the same shall be maintained by the Government, can be utilized for this type of craft.

A navigation channel of sufficient depth can be established at comparatively low cost, whereby modern inland traffic can move in abundance between Columbia and Charleston. The Army Engineers have rendered a report to the Congress showing the feasibility of this type of improvement, and the Corps of Engineers will soon complete a review of all reports along that line. Surely the Army Engineers, with the cooperation of the people of South Carolina, which I hereby pledge, will be able to work this problem out for the benefit of the people of a large section of our country.

I am also thinking today of the Savannah River, which forms the boundary between the States of South Carolina and Georgia, with the thriving city of Augusta, Georgia, located on its banks. Augusta has long been an important manufacturing center and is one which has the means and the supporting back country for increased growth. The Savannah River is not now improved for modern navigation. It is a fluctuating stream, and usually the channel is too

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low for navigation during the time when navigation is needed the most. At the mouth of the Savannah River is the city of Savannah, Georgia, a seaport with all the advantages inherent in a port which is located in close proximity to the ocean. These two cities, Augusta and Savannah, like Columbia and Charleston, need only to be connected by a modern, improved waterway to give them, and the surrounding territory of South Carolina and Georgia, the advantages of low-cost transportation which will bring new manufacturing and agricultural life to these two States.

The water resources of our country are a rich national heritage. The development of these resources to their full possibilities in the interest of the people has been a major concern of the Congress for many years.

Since rivers are used for several diverse ends, the problem is complicated. Navigation requires a regular flow; flood control looks to empty reservoirs in time of flood and the release of water from these reservoirs when the flood peak has passed; irrigation needs water available for farming purposes in dry seasons; and power developments call for storage to be released at irregular times to serve peak energy demands. These inconsistent purposes require a central control independent of State lines. Congress has placed that control with the Corps of Engineers and the Federal Power Commission. To insure the use of these water resources in the interest of the people, these agencies must engage in “river basin” planning, looking to all of the uses of water and to the region as a whole. The day is over when private parties may exploit one good dam site in contravention to the people’s interest in the entire basin and all of the uses of water.

Federal control of navigable waters does not mean that the rights of the State are ignored. The Federal Power Act and the several statutes under which the Corps of Engineers construct, protect the legitimate interests of the States. South Carolina has found these Federal agencies anxious to coordinate their plans with those of the State.

I would be remiss if I did not express my faith and confidence in the United States Army Engineers. I think they are a conservative group. Being old in history, they are what many persons would call an “old deal” agency. George Washington, himself, to whose interest in navigation we have already referred, requested
that the Corps of Engineers be formed. It has been active since that time. Their first rivers and harbors project was built about 1830, under authority of the Act of Congress approved May 24th, 1824, an Act to improve the navigation of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. The project consisted of the removal of the sand bars obstructing navigation, and was accomplished successfully by the construction of small dams which increased the flow over the bars and confined the channel within permanent banks.

One of the Corps' illustrious members, Robert E. Lee, had his first river and harbor experience, when, fresh out of West Point, he was ordered to duty on Cockspur Island in the Savannah River. It was there that he learned the first of his practical engineering lessons.

I repeat that the Corps of Engineers is a conservative group, and must be convinced by facts and figures that a project is justified and will return in benefits considerably more than it will cost before it will recommend the construction to Congress for authorization.

The subject of water transportation is inherently coupled with the beneficial use of our waterways. The Clark's Hill multi-purpose dam on the Savannah River, in South Carolina and Georgia, which is now under construction, will benefit a large section of the Southeast not only from the standpoint of navigation but also from the standpoint of flood control. It will make possible the utilization of rich bottom lands in the Savannah River basin which have lain fallow since before the War Between the States. It will open up a new and large recreational area to the people of the surrounding country, which will render not only profits to those who cater to tourists from far and near, but also returns in increased health to our citizens. It will make available an abundance of sure and certain hydro-electric power.

I am frank to say that I am not satisfied with the existing waterway system. True enough, it is performing admirably, but the through routes, that bare framework I mentioned before, cannot be adequately fed by existing waterways and channels along their general routes. Progress has been made in recent River and Harbor and Flood Control Acts authorizing construction of feeder waterways, but funds for such construction are not yet available in many instances. A lot of us are getting impatient with the delay.

I trust the Army Engineers to recommend only sound and necessary developments. When such developments have been authorized, I think we should insist that they be put into operation. I
know what an improved Savannah River and an improved Congaree River will do for my State. We need those benefits. The United States needs more than the framework. It needs the benefits of the fully developed system. Therefore, I strongly urge that we press for the construction of adequate feeder waterways so that the existing Inland Waterway System will return even greater and ever-increasing dividends to the United States.

These waterways are ours—they are God-given. It takes a comparatively small amount of money but wise and able study, such as that now being given by the Corps of Engineers, to make them available to our people for their maximum use. We cannot be true to our heritage unless we insist that the wise development of all our waterways be carried through to a successful conclusion, and without any unnecessary delay.

The final thing for consideration in the expansion of the natural waterways of the Country is one of finances and the method whereby the improvements can be secured. First of all, no project combining navigation, flood control and the generation of hydroelectric energy should be started without the thorough study of the Corps of Engineers, and then only projects should be built which meet the tests of that great body of capable and patriotic citizens.

It is most important in the development of a comprehensive national waterway system that no licenses be issued by the Federal Power Commission to private corporations, until they demonstrate their ability and determination to develop entire river basins, and to operate their dams in such a manner as will promote the real interest of flood control and navigation. It is sadly true that many private corporations in different sections of the Nation are now seeking to block multi-purpose developments, by applying for licenses to the Federal Power Commission to develop relatively isolated sites, but which sites will effectually block larger and well-planned projects. All of us wish private capital to become interested in the development of the waterways of the Nation, but in promoting that desirable goal we must be sure that the motives of private corporations are really not to hinder, but to promote, the development of entire river systems.

In the accomplishment of the National Waterway System, whenever the same can be worked out, the projects should be owned by individual States, or a combination of States or other compara-
tively local governmental subdivisions, in preference to federally owned projects. Wherever the development can be made by States, and other governmental subdivisions, the principle of States’ Rights can well be preserved and its purpose greatly promoted. Wherever local government, or combinations of States and other units, desire to build projects, the Federal Government should be prepared to offer financial assistance and buy the bonds to be issued by such units, with the option in view of holding them from the general market until the projects have proven themselves financially, at which time the United States Government can sell the bonds in the market at par and in many cases far above.

There will be instances where the benefits of a National Waterway System can be secured only by direct federal construction under the Corps of Engineers, or by the establishment of Federal Authorities to cover entire regions. Every citizen of America, who is willing to forego political and selfish prejudice, recognizes in his heart the great value that has come, not only to the area served but to the entire Nation, from the operation of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Under most able guidance of patriotic and capable executives and engineers, the Tennessee Valley Authority stands as a lasting monument to many great Americans such as President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Senator George W. Norris, as well as to many patriots who are still living to see the benefits of their handiwork. Whenever local governments, individual States, States in compacts, or other governmental subdivisions, are unable for any reason to undertake the construction of these vast and beneficial projects, the welfare of the United States should be promoted by the Federal Government, or federally created Authorities, coming into the picture and accomplishing the work.

Let me emphasize that all of us appreciate the necessity for economy in governmental expenditures at this time. Certainly non-essential activities and personnel must be eliminated. However, there are some functions and activities of government which are so essential to the future prosperity and happiness of our people that it would be almost criminal to neglect or eliminate them, and one of these is the continued development of our rivers and watersheds. Every dollar spent in making these streams navigable, in controlling floods, in developing power, and in the reforestation of their watersheds, is an investment in the future. It is protection for generations yet unborn. In the end every dollar invested will
yield handsome dividends, not only in dollars but in better living for our people. In this field I most earnestly appeal to our lawmakers in Congress not to be penny-wise and pound-foolish.

In closing, I recommend that this Rivers and Harbors Congress resolve and go on record as pledging its determination and zealous efforts, regardless of obstacles, to accomplish the expeditious completion of our national waterway system. For the benefit of the present and the future, the clarion call of this Convention to the people of America should be “Awake and Accomplish.”