Extension of remarks made by Governor Thurmond to the Sectional Meeting of Southern Commissioners of Agriculture on Freight Rate increase hearing

As you gentlemen may already know by press reports, the Southern Governors are in the uniform freight rate situation to see to it that, when finally concluded, railroad freight rates shall be fair and equitable to all shippers. With this end in mind, a meeting of the Rate Committee of the Southern Governors Rate Conference was held in my office on Saturday, September 6, 1947.

At this meeting we authorized Walter R. McDonald, President of the Southeastern Association of Railroad and Utilities Commissioners, to appear and speak for us at last week's hearing before the Interstate Commerce Commission, in opposition to any further increase in railroad freight rates on agricultural products. The hearing is still going on.

As you know, uniform class rates have already become effective, even though northern interests had this case before the U. S. Supreme Court. The Court upheld the decision of the Interstate Commerce Commission, and Uniform Class rates finally became effective on August 22, 1947. It was a long hard fight, but finally the South got part of its demands for uniformity settled.

Even before August 22 we realized that the Southern Governors were not through. The railroads had created their railroad Committee on Uniform Classification to publish a uniform classification as admonished by the Interstate Commerce Commission.

On August 5, 1947, this railroad Committee on Uniform Classification held a public hearing on their docket #1, which contains numerous items. At this meeting, Walter R. McDonald, speaking for the Southern Governors' Conference, informed the railroad Committee on Uniform Classification that the Southern Governors' Conference were in it to the end and that a technical expert had been employed by them to attend the various hearings. By the way, agricultural products were slated to be in Docket #1, but because establishing of such rates is complicated, it was decided to handle them under a later docket.

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You gentlemen may rest assured that when the railroad Committee on Uniform Classification does get to the discussion of railroad rates on agricultural products, our technical expert will see to it that such shippers get a fair deal. In addition, the various state public service commissions in the South will also see to it.

For your information, we have already been informed that the Southern Traffic League in analyzing Docket #1 found out that the railroad Committee on Uniform Classification had used as a "floor" the highest rating in any territory, observing no "ceiling" whatsoever. But our technical expert will help to straighten this out at the proper time.

In this fight for uniform freight rates I do not think any of us want any preferred treatment but we do want and will insist on fair and equitable treatment to all. To this end I am sure the Southern Governors will do all in their power to see to it that such treatment is accorded.