

Mississippi State University Libraries
Special Collections Department, Manuscripts Division

Citizen's Council Radio Forums
Acc. No. 597
Stephanie Rolph Transcripts Addition

Audiotape ID number: 6128

Date: 1961

Guest (s): Gov. Ernest F. Hollings (SC)

Title: Southern Governors' Conference, What It Can Accomplish

Note: Questions were paraphrased and/or shortened by the transcriber. For the exact question, please consult the audiotapes.

Morphew: Introduction...special program from Jackson where 4 southern Governors and representatives from 4 other southern states met recently to form the nucleus of what might develop into a south-wide organization...dynamic young Governor of SC...the Governors and representatives of the eight states voted to meet again in the next 60 days in Montgomery, what do you feel can be accomplished by having these meetings on a south-wide basis?

Hollings: I think it's very significant that the Governors from this section get together due to the deteriorative trend in the federal-state relations that we've seen come about here in the last several years, and more particularly the acceleration of it during the last several months. For example, at the Governors' Conference in Hawaii, rather than the Governors representing the feelings of their people they seemed to have come there to represent Washington, whether or not they were going to be for the Washington domestic, Washington administration's domestic program or whether they were there to oppose that domestic program, and I've come, as the others, to the conference in Jackson with a feeling not to be pro-Kennedy or anti-Kennedy administration but rather represent my sovereign state and try to retain for that state some of its own sovereignty by on the one hand fulfilling more positively the obligations and responsibilities and otherwise standing up against this trend that we see in Washington.

Morphew: Those who stand up for centralization must have some reason, do you know of any breakdown in the states performing their responsibilities or has Washington proven itself more capable of handling them?

Hollings: Well Washington has never proven itself more capable of handling, but we're in a very competitive world now, particularly the United States with the communications that exist in the representative nature of our own Congressmen, their eagerness to take on new programs and otherwise. I look upon the Washington administration and government itself as more or less a high pressure area with respect to our state functions. If we do not function well and positively, then this low pressure area of state responsibility will be

immediately superimposed by the high pressure Washington administration coming in and trying to take away this function. They call it leadership. We must exercise leadership at the federal level, when quite frankly under the Constitution they neither have the right nor the function of leadership, thought, or control or operation in any of these fields. I'm talking particularly of public education, in the field of urban affairs where they're now trying to institute a new department of urban affairs. Local self-government is just that, it belongs to the people in this urban area and in the metropolitan areas, and while they do have problems it is up to us at the state level to help them in the solution of these problems, not institute a new department of government at Washington. Otherwise, in the field of education, I think this is the prime responsibility of the state governments, and if we cannot handle this at the state level then we can't handle any of our established functions.

Morphew: In a very fine address you made at the conference, you stated that the failures of our time have been Washington failures and not failures at the state level. Does this mean that much of this so-called leadership or usurpation which Washington has performed lately, has been leadership by default?

Hollings: It's been leadership by default and stargazing and wide dreaming of do-gooding type activity. When they come in they think that all you've got to do in Washington is discover a problem and then hurl some money at it and it'll go away. And that's the approach on every score. In the field of federal education they have discovered a problem, namely improvement in the public education system in the several states, and it is a problem and one of ours, one that we should contend with, but Washington has more or less jockeyed the figures around to try to create a national emergency, a national problem and a Washington solution, which is completely wrong. And I have cited at the Jackson talk, I have cited on other occasions that here the state of South Carolina with the greatest proportion of children of school age on the one hand and the greatest problem otherwise with the least financial ability in that we're third from the bottom in per capita income, has more or less enjoyed an educational renaissance in the last ten years by constructing over 8700 brand new classrooms at the cost of 275 million dollars, increasing our teachers' pays some one hundred percent on an average of 10 percent each year for the past ten years, and coming forward in fields, for example, of even TV education. Now, we haven't solved this problem, but if 'poor South Carolina,' so to speak, can handle this, then why cannot rich New York on its own or California on its own, rather than join together with a furthering of bureaucracy in Washington and trying to have the education of our youth controlled through Washington bureaucracy. That to my mind would be the end of our federal system.

Morphew: It seems that whenever a quote 'problem' is discovered by Washington, the people of the country are sold that a problem exists. Why is this? Is it that Washington has such a good sales machinery for selling its story to the country or is it that the states are doing too little to sell their version to their own states even?

Hollings: Well, there is a natural tendency on the part of the people to resist new programs and that resistance finds itself in their local representation. They're attainable,

they can be reached, they can be contacted, they can be pressured better and properly pressured to withhold the advancement into a new field, the expansion of an already established field, the resistance so to speak of the increase in taxes. Now in Washington, there's never been any resistance to a tax increase. Rather they think that money grows on trees and all they've got to do is find this problem, designate x-millions or billions of dollars and that solves it and there's some concept that government has other than what it takes from the people. You and I both know that we have nothing either at the Washington level or at the state level or at the local level in public service than what we take from the people. There's no difference between a federal tax payer and a state tax payer, but unfortunately with the publicity and the approaches being used at the Washington level it gets around in from a direct action on the part of the people and they now look upon Washington in an, oh what type fashion, what can be done? After all, we can't control them, we can control you in our state capital. It's a consequence, we're a little bit slow, but we are more responsive in a sense of being reliable.

Morphew: The South has been referred to by many as being the largest minority group in the country, we hear a lot today about government by minority or pressure groups, do you believe the South can form itself into a single and cohesive and effective minority pressure group on the national scene?

Hollings: Well, we certainly have resolved ourselves willingly or unwillingly to a minority group. I don't know so much as I'd use the word 'pressure' as one of persuasion. I still believe that ours is the best way. I still believe that ours adheres to the fundamental principles on which this country was founded. I believe we inherently in the South think more individualistically and more responsibly towards the responsibilities of the individual. I think if we can show as we do in the field of industry daily, we in the South are attracting to the several southern states, here in Mississippi and South Carolina and other states, industry on the basis of adhering to the free enterprise system and maybe we can attract the attention of voters over the country to this as also being the best political system. Certainly that's what the country was founded on and I hope that before long these giveaway programs, these pressure group type programs in the metropolitan areas, these northern vote-getting schemes of northern politicians, will finally been seen through for what they actually are as they're beginning to be, in my judgment and they will realize that they will have to return to fundamental constitutional government, the free enterprise system or as I call it, the southern way. I think the southern way is the American way.

Morphew: Do you believe that people throughout the country are coming to realize that the problems of which we speak are not solely southern problems but American problems?

Hollings: They are American problems. There's no question in my mind, and it's fortunate, I believe, that we do have the leadership in the South that is still standing up to these responsibilities and protecting the nation from a complete socialistic trend of trying to have Washington to everything and be all things to all people.