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Guest (s): Senator Strom Thurmond (D-SC)

Title: Factors Affecting Internal Security

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

Morphew: Introduction...in some of your recent speeches you've said that several factors are affecting our internal security today, would you mind telling us what those factors are?

Thurmond: Well, I think big spending is one thing that vitally affects the internal security of this nation. Mr. Khrushchev has said that that's the way he expects Russia to take over the United States. He expects us to spend to ourselves to death.

Morphew: By big spending you mean big necessary spending or big unnecessary spending?

Thurmond: Well, I think that we have got to provide for the national defense, and after that I think we ought to keep all expenditures within the budget in excess division of the balance as is deemed advisable. I do not think we ought to spend beyond the budget more than income. I think it's a grave injustice to this country to spend more than we take in. It's not sound. An individual can't do it, a corporation can't do it, and the government can't do it. The government will eventually become insolvent if it keeps on doing that. We have spent more during the past 25 years than we've taken in. In fact, we have had unbalanced budgets in 20 out of the past 25 years. We cannot keep this up. Our interest alone, Bill (sic), is about 8 billion dollars a year. This is more than one-tenth of our income. So you can see what an individual is paying out on interest alone in supporting the government.

Morphew: What does the national debt figure out to now?

Thurmond: About two hundred and eighty-five billion dollars. We recently raised the debt ceiling again. I voted against it because I think it's unwise to keep raising it but we did raise it again up to two hundred and ninety-five billion dollars on a temporary basis.

Morphew: What does that figure out to be in family units?

Thurmond: Well, that is a debt of about fifty two hundred and forty dollars for every family in this country.

Morphew: In other words, if you and I and everyone were to sit down every week and write a check of a hundred dollars to Uncle Sam, maybe the debt would be paid.

Thurmond: That's correct. Now, some people say that defense is causing all this expenditures (sic), well, defense does take a lot of money, it takes more money than anything else, but that means our very survival and I think sooner or later the people of this country may come to the point where they're going to have to choose between survival and comforts. We may have to give up a lot of comforts if we're going to survive because we've got to keep strong. The only language the dictators know is force. We've got to keep powerful, and we can do that if we're willing to sacrifice on some of our non-defense, non-essential programs, some of the welfare programs. For instance, our defense this year is four and three-tenths billion dollars lower than it was during 1953 in the midst of the Korean War. Non-defense this year is nine and two-tenths billion dollars higher than it was then.

Morphew: The people who are crying defense, can't blame it on defense?

Thurmond: They can't blame it all on defense.

Morphew: What about federal aid to education? How does this tie in?

Thurmond: Well, I think it just causes more expenditures and centralizes more government in Washington which I think constitutes in itself an internal threat. I think when you centralize too much power in any central government it's very dangerous. Our forefathers came here seeking freedom and our forefathers who wrote the constitution decided they wanted a government of limited power and when the states wrote the constitution they gave the federal government certain powers and reserved all others to themselves. The federal government is supposed to be a government of limited powers but as the years have gone by more power has been encroached from the states and brought into the federal government and today the federal government is entirely too powerful. That's the reason I opposed federal aid to education. It's another step to get more power in the federal government. I think it's unnecessary cause the states are doing the job. I think it's unwise because it will lead to federal control of the schools. Wherever federal money goes there goes federal control. It may not be so when it first starts but it won't be but a few years before that is the case. Supreme Court decisions have held they've got that right, that if they put federal money there they've got the right of federal control. And then too it destroys local incentive and furthermore, the federal government is not able to do it. There's not a state in the nation that's not better able to support their schools better than the federal government.

Morphew: You mean, financially?

Thurmond: Financially. The federal government owes more money, our government does, than all the rest of the governments of the world put together. Our states have this responsibility and they ought to do it. Furthermore, it's unconstitutional. The word 'education' is not even mentioned in the federal constitution. And the field of education has never been delegated to the federal government. This is reserved to the states. Then, too, it's uneconomical. It costs the federal government more to do a job than it does the state government or the local school districts. And I think it's much wiser to let the states and the local school districts perform the task of education.

Morphew: Let's turn to the third threat...the number of bills being considered under the guise of civil rights...

Thurmond: Well, that's true. I think these civil rights programs are very dangerous. Senator Ervin of North Carolina is doing a very fine job in opposing these unconstitutional bills. I think they're so unnecessary, they're so unwise, and unquestionably unconstitutional. Now, a great many people want to treat the South today like a conquered province. They want to treat it even worse than we treated our enemies after World War II, after we conquered the Nazis. The attorney general under certain bills would become an integration czar almost. He would have the power of getting injunctions and he could be a regular terror in enforcing integration in this country, and I think it's most dangerous. Why, they've got some bills there that would provide to give bribes to the state if they will integrate the schools, as if they could buy the people of the South or some other state by giving them some money. The people of the South stand for principle and they can't be bought for a few paltry dollars. We think more of our children and we think more of our schools and it's an insult almost to the people of the South for anyone to advocate this. Then they've got a bill there to prevent freedom of speech. In other words, if you criticize the Court or criticize integration process there, why, they want to take you in court about it and punish you and that's a great mistake. They've got some bills there to pass, have one to pass an anti-lynching law. Well, lynching is nothing but murder. All the states have laws against murder. In fact, lynching is practically disappeared in the South. In some northern states where they have riots and trouble of various kinds, they have really what are lynchings, they call them crimes of other description, but in the question of bombings, well that's another crime there, they want to make that a federal crime. Well, I don't know it's any worse to destroy a school building by bombing than it would be to destroy it by fire or destroy it in some other way. These are local matters. Our constitution has not delegated to the federal government the field of law enforcement. That's left to the states. There are some crimes where they cross, they involve state lines such as narcotics and white slavery and others that are federal crimes. But a bombing or lynching occurs in the state, the people there have the right and the responsibility to punish one who commits such a crime. And then, some want to extend this civil rights commission. I don't know any good the civil rights commission's done. In fact, I think the members themselves feel like they've accomplished very little and they all want to resign, get off of it. But it's just a constant source of irritation and agitation and could stir up trouble. I think it's an unnecessary expense. Some people want to have an integration conciliation service. I don't see any need for that. Every agency we establish along this line just creates tensions and I think does far more harm than good.

Some want to open up the election registration records to the federal government. Well, those are matters for the states. Under the constitution the matter of elections has never been delegated to the federal government. It's the responsibility of the states, and the federal government has no jurisdiction in the field of elections. Now, the constitution can be amended and give the federal government jurisdiction, but now it doesn't have it and we ought to abide by the constitution. I think it'd be a mistake to give it to them. I think the states ought to retain jurisdiction of elections. Then some people want to endorse this desegregation decision of 1954, just go on record. Well, that's purely a play for minority votes. What can you accomplish by that? I think it's really an invasion of one branch of the government by the other. If the court hands down a decision that's not right, we ought to pass a law to correct it. The congress has the power to act. But just condemning a decision of the court, why, that would appear to be an invasion of one branch by another. Now, I think the finest civil rights that we have in this country are found in the Bill of Rights. The first ten amendments to the constitution: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the right to petition the government, the right to prevent troops from being quartered in one's home, and all of those rights that are listed there, including the tenth amendment, which reserves to the states all powers not delegated to the federal government. What finer civil rights could you have than the Bill of Rights and the Constitution? I'm proud that the constitution contains those civil rights. They are genuine civil rights. These are the matters that are being advocated, are chiefly proposed because of a play they are making to the minorities.