

John E. Rankin Political Address

October 7, 1947

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY
Post Office Box 571
Jackson., Mississippi 39205

AU 1009
SR 034
SR 087-088
TR 044

Speaker: Rankin, John E.

Title: John E. Rankin Political Address, October 7, 1947

RANKIN:

My fellow Mississippians, this is John Rankin, member of Congress from the first district and a candidate for the United States Senate in the November election. I have come to appeal to you for your earnest support. You would have heard from me sooner, but I was detained in Washington as a member of the Committee on Un-American Activities investigating the most dangerous ring of communist spies this country has ever known. As you, perhaps know, I created the Committee on Un-American Activities by amending the rules of the House at the beginning of the 79th Congress. It is doing more to expose the communist fronts in this country than any other agency of this government. I wish every voter in Mississippi could have attended the hearings, heard the testimony and looked into the faces of those conspirators who are sowing the seeds of communism throughout the country and plotting the overthrow of our government while our boys were dying by the thousands in Europe to get Hitler's heel off their necks. I note, in the newspapers, an attack on me by Drew Pearson and one by Fred Sullins in the Jackson Daily News accusing me of playing politics because of my attempts to help the hurricane-stricken areas along the Gulf Coast. I happened to be the only member of Congress from Mississippi in Washington when that horrible disaster occurred. I had had experience with like holocausts, such as our tornado here in Tupelo, Baldwin, Booneville, Verona and other places throughout my district. I knew what sufferings these disasters bring. I knew what public agencies could render the greatest service to the people in the stricken areas, and I immediately took every step I could to coordinate those agencies and to get temporary offices established in the damaged areas and to urge that funds be made available to them at once. I held conferences with the leaders of the Red Cross who agreed to make available \$1 million for immediate aid and who suggested to me the proper steps to take to coordinate other agencies that were in a position to help. In other words, I did everything I could to help those people who were in distress and needed all the assistance they could get. And, now, I find Drew Pearson and Fred Sullins attacking me and accusing me of playing politics with human misery for my efforts in trying to secure all the aid I could for the unfortunate victims of that terrible disaster. While my opponents were exhausting themselves running around over the state speaking to empty benches and vacant automobiles a-milling around Jackson in their futile efforts to stir up interest, I was in Washington attending to my official duties, and, when the people along the Gulf Coast appealed to me for assistance, I rendered them all the aid I possible could. I would do the same thing again under the same circumstances whether it suited Drew Pearson and Fred Sullins or not. I've waged many successful battles in Congress. Without fighting and fighting hard, your representative in the House or the

Senate accomplishes little or nothing. As Vice-President, Jack Garner, once said, "Congress is not a petting party. It is a battleground." And there never was a time when Mississippi needed another hard-fighting senator in that [?] body worse than she needs one to fill the present vacancy. If elected your senator, I propose to meet that responsibility to the fullest extent. I expect to cover the entire state before election day and will leave it to you as to whether or not I am the man to represent you in the United States Senate. I do not hesitate to say that Mississippi has more at stake in this race than she has had in a senatorial contest since reconstruction. Every enemy of the white people of Mississippi outside this state is calling for my defeat. They don't care whom you elect, just so you defeat John Rankin. Why are these enemies within our gates so bitterly opposed to me? Why are there stooges on the radio and in the press constantly assailing me? Why is the Communist Daily Worker and every communist-controlled Negro newspaper in the country attacking me on practically every issue? I'll tell you why. These enemies of your don't want me in the United States Senate, because I've not only taken the lead in exposing the activities of the enemies of our country at home and abroad, but I've defended the white people of the South and especially of Mississippi against every attack that has been made upon them, and they know that I will do the same thing in the United States Senate. They sneer at me because of my advocacy of white supremacy – the only system under which we can hope to live and prosper and be peaceful in the southern states. They know that I can and that I will take the floor the first hour, if necessary, and tear to shreds the arguments of the opposition who are attacking you and who are pushing those vicious measures that are calculated and designed to stir up trouble for you such as the anti-poll tax bill, the dishonest anti-lynching bill, which doesn't even pretend to protect an innocent man but only the guilty man, and the communistic FEPC bill which Governor Wright and I have fought so vigorously before the Senate committee and which I will be prepared to fight on the Senate floor. These enemies of your don't want John Rankin in the United States Senate. My record in the House in battling against those vicious measures and taking the hide off of everyone who attacked the white people of the South and, especially, of Mississippi is sufficient assurance that I will be able to meet this grave responsibility the first day. Yes, as I said, the first hour the Senate convenes. That is the reason your enemies outside the state don't want John Rankin, whom they call the fiery Mississippian, in the United States Senate. Let me call your attention to some of the things that I've done for the people of Mississippi and the nation in the past and some of the things I hope to accomplish as your senator. With reference to the Tennessee Valley Authority and Rural Electrification, I want to say that I am

proud of my record in those respects. I was co-author with Senator Norris of Nebraska of the bill creating the Tennessee Valley Authority, which has wrought the greatest development of ancient or modern times. I got cheap TVA power extended over every one of the 10 counties I represent and into 23 other counties in northern and central Mississippi. It is one of the greatest booms that ever came to any people anywhere at any time. The TVA yardstick is doing more to hold down your light and power rates than any other agency in this state or in the nation. I've led the fight for rural electrification from the beginning. If it had not been for my efforts, the chances are the farmers of this country, and especially the farmers of Mississippi, would not have had electricity in their homes during this generation and probably not for the next 50 years. We have not reached them all yet, but we are on our way. Farm men and women all over this state are begging for electricity in their homes, and I pledge you here and now that, as your senator, I will keep up the drive until we get cheap electricity to every farmhouse in Mississippi. It is the greatest economic blessing our farmers have ever known, and I propose to keep up the fight until we reach them all. I've supported every program to aid the farmers of Mississippi and the country as a whole and will continue to do so when I get to be your senator. I can say without fear of contradiction that I have done more for our veterans than any other man who ever served in the Congress of the United States. For 16 years, I was chairman of the Committee on World War Veterans' Legislation, and, during that time, I secured the passage of more legislation for their benefits than all of the members of Congress combined. You, World War I, boys will remember the abuse that was heaped upon me from my opposition to the vicious provisions of the so-called economy bill, which took the bread from the mouths of many of our disabled veterans, and especially the tubercular veterans and their widows and orphans, while aliens who had never fought for this country or worked for a living were put on relief at government expense. Many of those same aliens are, today, plotting the overthrow of this government. The veterans of World War II will recall that when many of them first entered the service they were drawing only \$21 a month, and some of the brass hats and some of the members of Congress wanted to reduce it to four dollars a month. I started the drive to raise it to \$50 a month and never let up until I secured the adoption from both houses of the Rankin amendment to raise the base pay of the enlisted men to \$50 a month for the first time in history. It did more for the morale in the rank and file of our Armed Forces than anything else that was done during the entire war. I, also, helped to put through the bill to give the enlisted men their terminal leave pay and to pay it in cash. The officers had already received their terminal leave pay, and there was no reason on earth

why the enlisted men should not have had theirs. I call attention to these facts to let you know that the ex-servicemen and their dependants will have a friend at court as long as I am a member of the United States Senate. These are only a few of the measures on which I have taken a definite stand in the interest of the people of our state and of our country. I will discuss others as the campaign progresses. You hear a great deal about peace and national defense. I am more than willing to help maintain peace among the nations of the earth, but, so long as an organized force prevails, such as international communism that is plotting the destruction of our country, we had better keep the atomic bomb, keep an ample supply of them on hand, maintain the strongest Air Force on earth with planes equipped to distribute those bombs and the best trained aviators in the world. As long as we do that, no nation will dare attack us, and we certainly have no desire to wage war on any other country. In my opinion, this is our hope for peace, not only for us of today, but for our children and our children's children for generations to come. You keep hearing about the various plans for aid to Europe – the Marshall Plan, the Truman Plans and other Plans. I want to give you my plan, the Rankin Plan. That is for the people of Europe to get out and go to work and stop begging the United States to put them on the dole. If they need more funds, let them float bonds against their own countries and obligate their own people to pay them and not be asking us to burden you and your children for generations to come. We cannot afford to assume this terrible responsibility and pile this enormous burden on the backs of the already overburdened taxpayers of America. Every humane individual is willing to help contribute towards feeding the starving women and children in the distressed areas, but that does not mean that we should set up a permanent, international WPA throughout the world to feed and clothe every lazy [lout] from Tokyo to Timbuktu at your expense. In conclusion, I want to appeal to you again for your support. Every [willing] [farm] person knows, it is the field against Rankin. My defeat would bring joy to the heart of every enemy of the white people of Mississippi living outside the state and to the enemies of the United States throughout the world. Every communist everywhere wants to see me defeated. Please take up my cause and help us to win an overwhelming victory. Let us serve notice on the world now that we are for protecting the people of Mississippi from her enemies outside the state. We are for protecting our country at all times and for saving America for Americans for all time to come. Thank you.

END OF RECORDING

INDEX

Anti-lynching bill - 2
Anti-poll tax bill - 2
Committee on Un-American Activities - 1
Communism – 1, 2, 4
Europe – 1, 4
Farmers – 3, 4
Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) - 2
Hitler, Adolph - 1
Jackson Daily News - 1
Marshall Plan - 4
Military – 1, 3, 4
Mississippi Gulf Coast - 1
National defense – 2, 4
Pearson, Drew - 1
Rural Electrification – 2, 3
Spies - 1
Sullins, Fred - 1
Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) – 2, 3
Truman Plan - 4
United States Congress – 1, 2, 3
United States Senate – 1, 2, 4
Wright, Fielding - 2