

"STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER"

(Address of Harold E. Stassen of Minnesota, delivered at a public meeting at the MILWAUKEE AUDITORIUM, sponsored by the Republican Organization of WISCONSIN and the Stassen for President Volunteers of Wisconsin, at 8:30 PM, November 24, 1947, and broadcast over the American Broadcasting Company networks.)

Mr. Chairman, Senator McCarthy, Governor Youngdahl, Distinguished Guests, My Neighbors of Wisconsin, Fellow-citizens all:

Two years ago, upon return to civilian life, on being questioned in Chicago as to my future activities, I responded that I intended to do everything within my power to help build a truly liberal, humanitarian, and victorious Republican Party.

A year ago, on December 17th in Washington, on being directly asked by the Press whether I intended to be a candidate for the Republican nomination for President, I answered frankly and truthfully, "Yes, I do."

Tonight, in Milwaukee, we open the definite drive for delegates to the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia and for nomination as the Republican standard bearer in 1948.

Tonight, insofar as possible, within the limits of one short address, I wish to pledge to you what my objectives would be as your President, what the method of conducting our campaign will be, and what you can do if you wish to help.

I realize full well that this is not considered as the politically wise thing to do. I know that the powerful President pickers consider that it is wrong to be so frank and forthright with the members of the Republican Party and with the people of America. It is their view that the correct procedure is to conduct very elaborate operations of looking the other way; that the hard controversial issues of the day should be avoided and the people should not be told our views upon them; that a long vacation trip should be taken admiring mountains and lakes and rivers and flowers and crops and livestock; but that great care should be taken never to meet a difficult real problem face to face. These riders of regal reaction hold that a position of photogenic availability should be maintained until such time as a key group of their men, with delegates in their pockets, make hard, tough, secret deals for a nomination and a subsequent administration.

Needless to add, whatever may be my own political fortune, I do not believe in that type of politics. I don't believe that it will yield the kind of leadership or administration that is essential for our country in this critical period in world history.

Thus at the very opening of our campaign, I present to you, straight from the shoulder, the overall goals that I would have as your President.

These are the two goals which we would keep before us as the beacon-lights while we thought and acted upon the manifold day to day and month to month problems.

First: To gain an increasingly better life for ourselves and for others, avoiding booms and busts and vigorously maintaining a free economy in America.

Second: To win an expanding individual freedom for Americans and for mankind, without the tragedy of a third world war.

All other issues would be kept in a position subordinate to these overall objectives, and all other problems would be resolved, having in mind their effect on these over-riding goals.

Specific discussion of some of our more immediate and detailed questions might serve to throw light upon my meaning in the broad stroke of these statements and will also stimulate consideration of the specific detailed measures.

As you know, I have presented in greater detail and precision in my newly published book, "Where I Stand", proposals in a wide range of these issues.

It is my view that if we are to maintain a healthy domestic economy in America, we must give priority attention to the two dark spots in our economic system - the extreme shortage of housing, and the lack of adequate health service for the average citizen.

We need a solid united support of the people of America behind our economic system and our form of government if we are to be successful in the crucial world contest of ways of life in which we are now engaged. But is it not clear that brilliant oratory about the American system falls on slightly skeptical ears when it reaches those million and more of veterans who served their country in the late war but now cannot find a home for themselves and their families.

We must take major resolute action to break through the housing jam in America. It requires action by government. It should be action consistent with the fundamental principles of individual ownership, private capital and free workmen of the American system. Specifically, here is what I propose: That the federal government promptly embark upon a major mass housebuilding program in which huge projects of as many as 25 thousand units are let out on contract to private builders for mass, on the site, construction. Through this we will begin to translate to the housebuilding field, the kind of efficiency, economy and speed which America has developed in the building of automobiles, refrigerators, tractors, radios, furniture, and airplanes. Cities selected for the projects should be those that are not only congested, but in which the city administration presents a modern up-to-date building ordinance which does not hamstring with archaic provisions the attempts at modern construction. They should be the cities in which building labor modernizes its rules and practices, and instead of presenting a network of featherbedding rules, with petty jurisdictional squabbles, developed at a time when they were seeking to protect shrinking building jobs in a depression, adopts a new set of rules designed to build the largest possible number of houses at the least cost, depending upon the entire success of the whole American economy for their future high employment and steady jobs.

These major projects should be developed in a manner that the supply of lumber, plumbing, electrical equipment and all the other component parts of a house are expanded for them. The entire field of ordinary construction of tailor-made houses to suit owners, or of private builders for re-sale, should be encouraged to proceed in its present manner. The major new developments under the Federal mass home-building program should be used in the first instance to expand the number of houses available. Then as total construction steps up and availability of housing improves, the federal program should replace as many existing structures in the slums as new units are furnished, so that in their long range calculations private capital and builders can make their plans and their estimates without major regard for the federal program.

Experience of the last twenty years with the very difficult restraints by ordinances and local taxes and union practices, seem to me to clearly call for this kind of major action to break through.

But equally important, Uncle Sam should not become a landlord. Therefore I propose that the finished houses should be promptly sold, partly to owner occupiers and owner cooperative occupiers, somewhat as in the Swedish and Norwegian plans, and partly to insurance companies and other sources of major capital for investment and rental.

I am opposed to public housing in which government becomes the landlord, as it has all the abuses and the weakness of bureaucratic supervision, and opens up political favoritism and adds excess centralized power in government.

In the health field, it is my proposal that new insurance coverage be extended for major medical and hospital expense but not for the ordinary run of such expense.

Specifically, everyone on social security should be covered by a new insurance that will pay duly verified and reasonable bills which are necessarily incurred for medical and hospital expense in excess of \$250 in any one year. Amounts below \$250 in a year are to continue to be the personal responsibility of the individual to be covered by savings or payments by himself or by his own voluntary blue cross hospital plan or personal private insurance or other means.

Through this means, the economic catastrophe that now comes with major illness or accident to an individual or one of his loved ones, is removed, but the entire independence of the medical profession and the personal responsibility of the individual citizen for his ordinary expense is retained. This proposal is presented as a means of working out an admittedly important medical and health problem and doing it without entering into the evils of the overall compulsory medical insurance program such as the Wagner-Murray-Dingle Bill. I consider this to be an American type of answer to a difficult social and economic problem.

It is my further view that a whole set of policies must be inaugurated to prevent the boom and bust tendencies of our free economy. Among these are reduction in taxes specifically to give a break to small new businesses and to avoid taking more than one-half of the income of any citizen of our country in time of peace. Both of these measures are important to stimulate the dynamics of our capitalism and to broaden the competition and increase the production of our total economic machine. They will tend to prevent the boom side of our cycle and build bulwarks against the depth of our depression drop. With this revision in taxes should come a constant emphasis on efficiency in the Federal Government with a streamlining of the administrative setups and spending less money in the civilian activities at Washington.

Consumer credit control should be maintained to hold back on consumer credit during the periods of high employment and to ease up when employment begins to drop. Likewise, an extensive program of major worthwhile public improvement to be carried on by private contract should always be ready to throw into gear when a dip occurs in our economic system.

One of the major supporting phases of our broad economic policy should be the insistence that agriculture should never be permitted to be distressed and shortchanged in our American economy. This is not only important for the purpose of fairness to agriculture, but it is also a great safeguard against depressions in our economic system. This means specifically that floors need to be maintained to safeguard the income of the family-sized farm, and to stimulate production. Coupled with this, there must be a soil conservation program and continuous research in new uses for agricultural products, new varieties of seed, and reclamation and water conservation.

A labor policy that is fair and just and maintains a balance between individually managed capital and free organized labor is imperative. In my judgment this will develop out of the Taft Hartley Law, with comparatively minor amendments of that law in accordance with our experience under it. I do not agree with the attacks upon the law made by labor's leadership and, I submit that if the members of organized labor examine this law, which has been labeled as a bad package, they will find that it has good contents for them and for their country. The provisions to prevent quickie strikes in public utilities and coal and steel and shipping and transportation are good provisions. The provisions for greater accountability of labor's leadership to their members of finances and other union affairs are good provisions. The provisions to decrease the jurisdictional strikes and outlawing the secondary boycott are good provisions. Building upon the concept that the overwhelming majority of the working men and women of America are as loyal and faithful to their country as are any other citizens, we can develop a fair labor policy that maintains a balance between capital and labor and yields productive results for all.

Our American economic system has yielded a higher production and a fairer distribution of goods to all than any other economic system in the history of the world. By alert developments to meet new problems, by holding fast to fundamentals but being willing to reach out in new applications, there is no reason why this country cannot maintain extremely high production, without economic crashes or depressions, with an increasing fairness of distribution, and a better life for its people. Accomplishing this will be one of the major factors contributing to the advance of standards of living of peoples in other parts of the world and to avoiding the holocaust of a third world war.

I say this because it is clear that a major change is needed in the foreign policy of the Soviet Union of Russia if we are to have bright prospects for a lasting peace. The foreign policy of Russia now is based upon the concept that our capitalism is bound to have an economic crash and to fail. One of the premises for change will be the demonstration that they are wrong in this concept. Our success at home, coupled with our affirmative aid to peoples in other parts of the world, carrying out the Marshall Plan and aid to China, which is now receiving almost unanimous public support, will cause an increasing movement away

from the confining effects and low productivity and decreasing liberty of both socialism and communism, the larger flow of trade, and a steadily improving standard of living for peoples everywhere.

We look forward to the day when not only the peoples of Western Europe, but also the peoples of Eastern Europe, including Poland, where fate has been so tragic and unfair, are enjoying a better standard of living and more of freedom than their present plight. For this purpose we will rebuild a peaceful Ruhr, a peaceful Germany, with careful supervision to insure against subversion. Clearly, however, concentration upon economic strength must not be our only approach to the world's problems of peace.

We must follow a consistent over-all policy in America. One of the first inconsistencies to correct is that of the present shipments of machine tools and precision instruments and steel products to Russia. Unless, and until, America reaches clear agreements with Russia for the constructive and open building toward peace, we should not ship one single machine or material that could become a part of a Communist war machine.

We need to give affirmative, strong backing to the growth and development of the United Nations, to recognize its limitations in its early stages and maintain for ourselves a strong military position for our own future security and for its stable effect in the world. We must make it clear that we know that the best way to defend the freedom of the American people is to oppose ruthless aggression wherever it first arises in this postwar world. As your President, I would seek to make it constantly evident to all the nations of the world that they need never fear aggression from America, but that if they commit aggression, they will have cause to fear the countermoves of America. I would seek to make it clear that we would never follow a policy of appeasement toward anyone and we would not repeat the mistakes of Munich or of Potsdam.

We must maintain such strength that no one is tempted to try aggression by force or to endeavor to dominate us by force, and further, so that if war does come again to this world, we will win - and win with a minimum of loss of life. This requires maintaining manpower in our armed forces to a reasonable degree, keeping strong and trained reserves, alert and ready airpower, and un ahead with our research.

We would also definitely move to clear up Communist infiltration in America and do it with complete respect for constitutional rights and individual civil liberties.

In this respect we would concentrate first of all upon improving the situation in New York which is now the center of Communist activity in this country. Over 40 percent of the known Communists are in New York. It is the place of publication of their newspaper, The Daily Worker, and it is the headquarters for the activities of the Communists. It is also the center of infiltration of some of the major labor unions. It has been a natural target for their actions because of its being such a key center of communications and of trade and press. With the cooperation of federal, state and local governments, this can be promptly cleared up.

In the succeeding weeks and months I intend to spell out in detail our program upon the important issues of our time, relating them to our overall goals and objectives. I will not do so with an attitude that these things exactly must be done. Rather do I expose detailed suggestions to stimulate the search for answers, that others might come to the fore with additional facts and alternative proposals, and we might find together the best program that America can follow and that our Republican Party can present. The best of progress in America has been made when liberal, forward-looking proposals have been blended and adjusted with conservative attitudes into an agreed program of action. In that sense, I do not clash with the conservatives of the Republican Party, but rather do I seek the area of agreement with them of the basis on which we can join in action by the Congress and by the nation.

I say to you tonight very frankly, that if you agree substantially with the proposals and the goals that we present, I would appreciate your support in this campaign. It will be a hard, uphill fight. We will need to overcome some of the entrenched prejudice within our party. We will need to reach the millions of the people of the country with our message. We will need to win primaries and win conventions. The fight will be an uphill fight, but it will be a fight worth waging for the future of America. If you would join with us, speak to your friends and your neighbors and your relatives. To this great auditorium audience I frankly add: Remember that it also takes money to carry on a nationwide campaign. Speak to the Republican leaders that you know, enlist the new voters. Steadily build support looking toward a victory in the Wisconsin primary on next April 6th, in the National Convention in June, and in the final election in November. But above all, look forward to a forthright, vigorous administration of the government of this great country in this crucial period in history, with our eyes lifted to the twin goals of gaining a better life, and winning expanding freedom, for ourselves and for others in a world at peace.



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