

[1945]

QUOTATIONS FROM HUBERT H. HUMPHREY BEFORE THE MINNEAPOLIS BOARD
OF BUSINESS AGENTS, THURSDAY, FEB. 1

The fight which Henry A. Wallace is waging in behalf of a governmental policy that will ensure security for the common man in the post-war was described as a turning point in the history of the progressive movement in a talk by Hubert H. Humphrey before the Business Agents luncheon Thursday, February 1.

Humphrey, the labor-endorsed candidate for mayor, fresh back from Washington where he had attended the inauguration of President Roosevelt and where he had participated in the fight to obtain Wallace's ratification by the Senate, gave an intimate, first-hand account of the struggle now going on in Washington between the forces of reaction and progressivism.

"Whatever its outcome, the controversy centering around the appointment of Henry Wallace has sharpened the issue of full employment and the attainment of a progressive policy for post-war America. It is demonstrated what a fight must be waged if America is to make a real attempt to build a post-war economy capable of supporting 60,000,000 jobs. It was an appropriate coincidence that Congress received the Wallace nomination and the Murray Full Employment Bill on the same day. Mr. Wallace and the Murray bill aroused approximately equal degrees of resentment amongst conservatives in and out of Congress, whose only claim to distinction is that they ran us into the greatest depression of our history. Mr. Wallace and the Murray bill are both described as visionary, yet the real objection to both of them is that they insist upon facing the facts of our economy.

"I had the opportunity to listen to Mr. Wallace speak before the Senate Commerce Committee. As you well knew, the Committee room was jammed to the very doors and Wallace received a tremendous ovation. In this statesmanlike speech, Wallace charted the kind of a post-war future that all America wanted and he did so with the same admirable courage which Americans before us faced and solved the great problems of the past. It was a moving experience to hear Henry

Wallace speak in his own defense. He was concerned with the fact that our capacity for producing wealth has been enormously expanded during the war. He says that it will be disastrous if we do not learn fully to utilize this capacity in post-war period. Wallace understands that American cannot survive half prosperous and half poverty stricken. He proposed a plan for full employment after the war and he offered to that committee a concrete program to fulfill it. Wallace made it clear that he believed in the system of private enterprise but he made it equally clear that he believed government must assume the responsibility for the well being of its citizens, must spend in order to save our human and physical resources and must play a large role in planning tomorrow's economic order.

"He demanded to know whether America is prepared to meet the challenge of peace time as it has met the challenge of war. He denounced monopoly and cartels and pledged himself to a program of action directed against them. I recall Wallace making this statement: 'let us not forget the painful lesson of the rise of facism; let us remember that political democracy is at best insecure and unstable without economic democracy.' I recognize that 'economic democracy' is a vague phrase but not so to Henry Wallace for what he envisages is a program of cooperation between government and business not dictation of business by government. What he envisages is a series of measures designed to stimulate freedom and enterprise. It is well to remember that the program as set down before this committee by Henry Wallace is but a fuller development of the application of the President's Economic Bill of Rights. It is a fulfillment of Roosevelt's pledge of 60,000,000 jobs after the war. For Democrats and Republicans alike, the vote on Wallace and the powers/^{he} is to exercise is a vote for or against full employment.

"Wallace was on the stand for more than four hours. At this particular hearing he announced that he would accept the commerce post even if the financial authority as outlined under the Reconstruction Finance Corporation were taken

away from him. Whatever may be the outcome of this senate battle, Wallace had once again strengthened his long range political stature. He had reaffirmed his leadership of the United States Progressive movement. It becomes the duty of all liberal minded persons to read the testimony of Henry Wallace before the Commerce Committee. It becomes our obligation to understand his background and his experience, his goals and his aims. Lest we forget, it is well to re-state some of the experience behind Henry Wallace. The main argument against his confirmation was that he was a visionary and impractical idealist and lacking in experience. For eight years he was Secretary of Agriculture. During that period, the Commodity Credit Corporation, the Farm Security Administration, the Farm Credit Administration and the Rural Electrification Administration were under his supervision. During that period, these agencies loaned over six billion dollars. They made \$11,500,000 separate commodity credit loans and \$1,208,000 rural re-habilitation loans. Wallace arranged the financing to permit over 20,000 tenant farmers to buy their own farms. These loans were not only made on a sound business basis but they were also made in the public interest. Farmers benefited, consumers benefited and the interest of the Nation was advanced as a result of these programs.

"I think that Henry Wallace summed up the issue pretty well in the following statement:

'The real motive underlying these suggestions for stripping the Dept. of Commerce of its vast financial powers has, of course, nothing to do with my competence to administer these powers. The real issue is whether or not the powers of the Reconstruction Finance Corp. and its giant subsidiaries are to be used only to help big business or whether these powers are also to be used to help little business and to help carry out the President's commitment of 60,000,000 jobs.

'This is not any petty question of personalities. This is a question of fundamental policy. It is the question of the path which America will follow

in the future. So that there can be no doubt in anyone's mind where I stand on these fundamental issues, I would like to take this opportunity to discuss with you the future which I feel is in store for America.'

"The program of Henry Wallace's may be summed up in eight points:

1. Government aid for private investors dedicated to business expansion and fuller employment.
2. The establishment of trade policies which will greatly expand our foreign trade.
3. The planning and the establishment of public works programs in times of depression which will stimulate enterprise and guaranty jobs.
4. The attainment of higher wages and equitable and fair farm practices.
5. The breaking of monopolies and cartels and the establishment of conditions of fair competition.
6. A broad program of public and private housing and expansion of medical and health services, both of public and private agencies.
7. An expanded and broadened social security program.
8. The encouragement and establishment of better facilities for technical and higher education for all qualified young men and women.

"While in Washington I made a thorough investigation of these agencies entrusted with the responsibility for planning public works and public housing. I believe I came away fortified with facts and materials which will be of benefit in the establishment of urban and housing development programs for the city of Minneapolis. Minneapolis is the only major city in America without a program of public and private housing. Our best laid plans by a City Planning Commission will come to nothing unless our state legislature is willing to pass enabling legislation which will make possible a broad program of urban and public works development. At a later date I shall present to the people of this community a integrated program for the accomplishment of our housing needs and our over-all city re-habilitation.



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