

MEET THE PRESS

NOVEMBER 5, 1948

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ANNOUNCER:

Four of the country's ace newsmen are gathered around the microphones here in Washington, D. C. ready to fire questions at Mayor Hubert H. Humphrey, Jr., who just beat Joseph Ball for the Senate seat from Minnesota in a campaign that attracted nation-wide interest.

Each week Mutual presents Meet The Press in cooperation with the editors of the American Mercury, one of America's most fearless, outspoken and stimulating magazines.

Our press conference will begin in just a moment.

If a visitor from Mars had been with us during the last few campaign weeks he'd have felt certain that America was faced with revolution. Each political party tried hard to prove that we would be lost unless it won. There was imprudent talk and often irresponsible and violent talk. Anyone who didn't know America might well have concluded that there would soon be barricades in the streets and public squares - that no matter who won the defeated groups would resist the result of the election by force. But here we are. The election is over, calm and sanity prevail and America has gone back to work, secure in the knowledge that our institutions are safe, that the country is too sound for any man to ruin or take over.

The American people have been through many national elections and are never overly disturbed by them. They know in their hearts what Lincoln once put magnificently into words. He said and I quote, "I've been selected to fill an important office for a brief period and am now, in your eyes, invested with an influence which will soon pass away. But should my administration prove to be a very wicked one, or what is more probable a very foolish one, if you the people are true to yourselves

Return to Max Kampelman

ANNOUNCER (CONT):

and the Constitution, there is but little harm I can do, thank God."

And now, here is the well-known editor Lawrence Spivak, to welcome the new Senator, Hubert H. Humphrey, Jr., and the gentlemen of the press.

SPIVAK:

Welcome everybody to another weekly news conference. Seated around the press table here in our Washington studio are May Craig of the Portland-Maine-Express, Kenneth Crawford of Newsweek Magazine, Phelps Adams of the New York Sun and J. R. Wiggins of the Washington Post.

The man who has accepted the challenge of the press is seated at this moment in our Minneapolis studio. In a special two-way hookup during the next thirty minutes, the press will fire questions at Hubert H. Humphrey, Jr., the new United States Senator from Minnesota. His defeat of Joseph Ball was described by the Nation Magazine as a one-man miracle, wrought in defiance of all the political laws and probabilities. Hubert Humphrey, at the age of thirty-seven, will be one of the youngest members of the United States Senate. He was elected Mayor of Minneapolis for the first time in 1945 by the largest plurality in that city's history. He was re-elected in 1947 by an even larger vote. He won national prominence at the Democratic National Convention this summer when he sponsored and pushed through the controversial Civil Rights plank, which led to the formation of the Dixiecrat Party. A Vice-Chairman of the Americans for Democratic Action he ran for the Senate under the banner of Independent Progressives, rather than as a Truman Democrat.

And now, Senator Humphrey if you are ready out there in Minnesota, we'll start the questions. Are you ready, Senator Humphrey?

HUMPHREY:

I should say I am.

SPIVAK:

Okay, Mr. Adams, you have the first question.

ADAMS:

Senator Humphrey, did you favor President Truman's renomination before the convention at Philadelphia?

HUMPHREY:

I was pledged to one of those programs known as the open convention.

ADAMS:

Well, was that because you didn't think President Truman could win or because you didn't think he was a good President?

HUMPHREY:

No, I felt it was important for the Democratic Party to prove to the American people that no one person had a monopoly upon the nomination. It was my considered judgment that it would be good for the party to have some contest at the convention. I might say that I had supported President Truman at two state conventions. I spoke at the Wisconsin State Convention of the Democratic Party and urged the renomination of President Truman. I also defended the President at our own state convention here in Minnesota.

ADAMS:

But you did work for an uninstructed delegation from your state, did you not, sir?

HUMPHREY:

I worked for an uninstructed delegation.

ADAMS:

Did you think President Truman was going to win this election?

HUMPHREY:

Did I think he was going to win the election?

ADAMS:

Yes, come on, come now --

HUMPHREY:

Very frankly, I felt that it would take a miracle and he produced a miracle.

CRAIG:

Well, Senator, if you don't mind my calling you Senator, well you know you are - don't you think that Truman promised more than he can do - do you think even through the new Congress that he can obtain his program?

HUMPHREY:

Well, after watching President Truman win this election almost singlehandedly I don't think any American can say that he's promised more than he can do. He already has delivered more than anybody else thought he could do.

CRAIG:

Well, I don't know that he has delivered anything yet. He hasn't had a chance with the Republican Congress and even this new Congress, he's got a lot of opposition, reactionary Republicans, reactionary Democrats.

HUMPHREY:

Well, what I was pointing out, Miss Craig, was that the President surely delivered something that people didn't expect. He delivered one of the greatest victories in American political history and he delivered it against the concentrated opposition of the Republican Party, the Dixiecrats, the Wallaceites and I would say a vast majority of the American press. That indicates, to me, that he's quite a capable man.

CRAIG:

But, Senator, what I mean is he delivered on a promise, now he's got to make good on the promise and what I want to know is - do you think he can make good on the promise?

HUMPHREY:

I -- think he can make good on a great deal of his program. He was surely very explicit in what he believed in and may I say that I think a large number of

HUMPHREY (CONT):

Congressmen and Senators were elected simply because of his definiteness of program and we went along with that program and I would like to correct one misstatement here, Mr. Spivak, Hubert Humphrey did not run as an Independent Progressive. Hubert Humphrey ran as a Democrat and Hubert Humphrey campaigned up and down the state of Minnesota for Harry S. Truman for President and he never pulled any punches. He went from over - about 675 speeches in behalf of the President in his candidacy.

WIGGINS:

Senator, you were Vice-Chairman of the Americans for Democratic Action, were you not?

HUMPHREY:

That's right.

WIGGINS:

And do you recall an ADA pamphlet which stated that Truman had not won the minds and hearts of the people and declaring that this grave moment needs a new face and victory can be won by Eisenhower and/or Douglas?

HUMPHREY:

Yes I do, sir.

WIGGINS:

Do you still think that you and the rest of the ADA were right in wishing to ditch Harry Truman?

HUMPHREY:

I think we were dead wrong. And I think confession is good for the soul.

WIGGINS:

I think that's magnificent.

CRAWFORD:

Senator, what do you regard as the principle issue, the decisive issue in your campaign against Senator Ball?

HUMPHREY:

Well, I don't know if there was any one decisive issue. There was a definite conflict of political philosophy. I campaigned on the basis of the New Deal program and the program of President Truman. I would say that if there was any one - there were possibly two decisive issues. One was on the matter of the labor legislation and another one, I would say, would be on foreign policy. I surely disagreed with the Senator on foreign policy and made no bones about so stating.

CRAWFORD:

How about the Taft-Hartley Law, Senator?

HUMPHREY:

He was for one position, I was for the other. He was for pointing with what he considered to be justifiable pride and I pointed out that I didn't think it was anything to be too proud about.

CRAWFORD:

One more question, Senator. You're best known since the convention, I think, to the country as a whole as the man who pushed through the Civil Rights plank that pushed the Dixiecrats overboard.

HUMPHREY:

That's right.

CRAWFORD:

How do you expect to follow up on that? What sort of program do you envisage?

HUMPHREY:

Well, I would like to say that my position on the Civil Rights program was one in support of the President. I thought that was one of the most magnificent parts of President Truman's program as he filled out the term of President Roosevelt.

CRAWFORD:

What I mean is do you expect to get through this next Congress an anti-lynching bill, for example?

HUMPHREY:

I surely think we can. The President is the leader of our party. I think anyone with any good political sense will recognize that President Truman has been the one that has given leadership and has proven his leadership and he recommended that program and I think he'll recommend it to the Congress and I will support him.

CRAWFORD:

In other words, you'll just let the Dixiecrats go, the Democratic Party having got along without them in this election, will continue to get along without them?

HUMPHREY:

Well, I wouldn't want to be that abrupt with the Dixiecrats. May I say that I think the President is not obligated to anyone. He had the real opposition of the Dixiecrats. Frankly, I hope that some of them will come back to support some of these programs. And as far as I know that I think that there are certain basic programs that they will support.

SPIVAK:

Well, Mr. Humphrey, what do you personally plan to do, as far as the national FEPC, for example, goes. Are you going to try to put legislation through Congress on those issues?

HUMPHREY:

May I just say that I recognize that I am a newcomer to the Senate of the United States. I'm the Junior Senator from Minnesota and I have an awful lot to learn and I know it and I'm going to look forward to the opportunity of becoming much more informed on many national issues and I'm going to be a cooperative member of the United States Senate. I'm going to support President Truman and his program.

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HUMPHREY (CONT):

If he asks for a program of - which I think he will, he didn't mince any words about it on Civil Rights, I'm going to support that. I'm surely not foolish enough, may I say, to think that some young fellow from out here in Minnesota is going to come down and upset the Congress of the United States, nor do I have any intention of trying to do so.

SPIVAK:

In short, if he lets the Civil Rights program drop, you're going to let it drop along with him?

HUMPHREY:

Oh no, I wouldn't say that. I don't think the President is going to let the Civil Rights program drop and we're not going to let it drop.

ADAMS:

Well I gather then, Senator, that you don't expect to introduce this Civil Rights legislation in Congress yourself?

HUMPHREY:

Well I frankly haven't had much time to think about introducing any legislation into the Senate of the United States. I intend to be down there and I will surely cooperate with those that want to go along with such a program in their six-year term, may I say, and maybe in six years a man will get his feet pretty well on the ground.

ADAMS:

Well now do you think this issue should be taken up among the first items to come before the new Congress or should it be left until later, in your opinion?

HUMPHREY:

Well, I think it - I don't know just what you mean by a first item. I hope that it will be taken up within the first year, yes.

ADAMS:

Well, I was speaking of the session, particularly, Senator. It's been complained that in the past the Republicans have left this 'til late in the session when a filibuster could lick it. Now do you think it should be brought up early so that a filibuster can't beat it?

HUMPHREY:

Yes. I think that it should be. And I want to say to my Republican friends - because both parties endorse the Civil Rights program - that wasn't a controversial issue between the two political parties - that if both the Democratic members and the Republican members are sincere on Civil Rights, I don't think there are enough votes to stop its passage and I'm confident that the President will sign it. He was the one that initiated it. I think this is one place where the bi-partisan policy might be extended to domestic affairs and I would surely support such a program.

ADAMS:

Well it isn't a question of bi-partisan policy, is it? It's a question for Southern Democrats who've always been able to lick it with a filibuster.

HUMPHREY:

There are a sufficient number of Democrats and Republicans who are supposedly pledged to a Civil Rights program to stop any filibuster and it's just simply a matter of arithmetic. I think everybody recognizes that.

ADAMS:

Well, one more question. If you cannot get cloture to stop a filibuster would you think this program should be laid aside in favor of some other program or is this the most important part of the President's program to you?

HUMPHREY:

Oh, in other words you mean that the whole program of legislation should be stopped? Is that what you're referring to?

ADAMS:

Yes, that's what I'm---

HUMPHREY:

Well, of course not. We've had - there are many issues that have to be worked on and I'm convinced that the people that are vitally concerned with Civil Rights are equally concerned with a host of Democratic domestic issues. The housing program, the matter of inflation and they're concerned with foreign policy. Those of us that are champions of Civil Rights, if we can call ourselves that, are not so let me say narrow-minded as to believe that there's but one issue and that the whole country must stop dead until that issue is accomplished.

SPIVAK:

Now are there any more questions on Civil Rights?

CRAWFORD:

Senator, there's one more question in that connection. It has been suggested that the thing to do is amend the rules of the Senate quickly at this session to take care of the filibuster, that is to make them harder. Would you be in sympathy with that?

HUMPHREY:

To make this filibuster more difficult you mean? Is that right?

CRAWFORD:

Yes, that's right.

HUMPHREY:

Well, I would be in favor of that, yes. I think that's something that requires a little bit more thinking. I have been of the mind that we shouldn't stop the processes of American government by a few willful men and I think there's much to be done so that anything that can expedite the flow of government business ought to be undertaken.

CRAIG:

Senator, I was interested in your saying that there might be a few fundamental basic points upon which you could meet with the Dixiecrats. I'm astonished to hear you say that. They went to the extreme of leaving the party on this. It's a vital States Rights matter with them. What basis do you think you could meet them on?

HUMPHREY:

How many Dixiecrats did they have?

ADAMS:

Four states, Senator.

HUMPHREY:

That's right. That's eight Senators and how many Congressmen.

ADAMS:

They didn't run any Congressmen.

HUMPHREY:

All right. Then do you think that four states should have the - should be given the privilege of stopping the entire flow of American progress? I don't think that the Congress is going to do that---

CRAIG:

That wasn't the question. Senator, you made the statement you thought there was some basis upon which you could meet the Dixiecrats.

HUMPHREY:

Why, I'm simply saying that I think that there are people in the Southland - I've had the privilege of living there - that are just as much concerned about the elimination of poll tax, for example, and the security of person, which means the elimination of or federal prosecution for any lynching, those are two basic things that I think can be gotten through.

ADAMS:

Well isn't it true, Senator, that there are over a hundred Southern Democrats in the House and that the great majority of those - over eighty of them, in fact - are Conservatives and might belong to the Dixiecrat school, so to speak?

HUMPHREY:

I disagree with that when you say they're Conservatives. As a matter of fact I'm pretty proud of some of our Southern Representatives. They helped initiate the New Deal program. They were a whole lot more liberal, may I say, than their Republican opposition.

ADAMS:

Well, Senator---

HUMPHREY:

They went along with housing program, with rural electrification, with agricultural programs, with public health measures. Let's not have anybody try to brand our Southern friends as being a group of Conservatives. There may be some Conservatives amongst them, but believe me, they are outnumbered and outmanned and, let me say, out-conservatized by some of their friends to the North.

ADAMS:

Well isn't it true that over eighty of them voted to pass the Taft-Hartley Law, for example, over President Truman's veto?

HUMPHREY:

That's very right.

ADAMS:

Well, that's a Conservative, isn't it?

HUMPHREY:

That's - on that issue, yes. But not on all issues. Let's not brand a man a complete Conservative just on the basis of one issue and may I say that sometimes people change their minds.

WIGGINS:

Senator, the Democratic Party emerged from this election as a party of the Democratic center, not necessarily the center of the whole political spectrum, but the Democratic Party sheared off its extreme right and its extreme left.

HUMPHREY:

Yes sir.

WIGGINS:

Do you think that a party confined within that middle range can go ahead to continued victory in the American political field and that therefore no compromise with either the extreme left or the right is necessary?

HUMPHREY:

I surely do, Mr. Wiggins. As a matter of fact I think that's one of the great accomplishments of this election. I think it's one of the - it's a real tribute to President Truman that with the opposition on the extreme left and the opposition on the extreme right that the President was able to go through to victory and that a majority of the Congress came through to victory.

WIGGINS:

Senator, there's one question in which a great many people in Washington are much interested. The Democratic platform states that the party favors the extension of the right of suffrage to the people of the District of Columbia.

HUMPHREY:

Yes sir.

WIGGINS:

I would like to know what your position on that is.

HUMPHREY:

I think the members - the people of the District of Columbia are American citizens, I think they should have the right to vote. If we are going to insist on the Southern states giving people the full right of suffrage I don't know why the federal government in its jurisdiction shouldn't be willing to extend it.

CRAIG:

Senator, we've dealt rather at length with the right wing Dixiecrats. What would you do legislatively to curb Communism?

HUMPHREY:

What is that?

CRAIG:

What would you do legislatively to curb Communists?

HUMPHREY:

Well, frankly, I think the best way to curb Communists is by the kind of an election we had on November 2nd. They got about as many votes here as - well, they got so few votes, let me say, that they're surely not a menace in this country. Dynamic Democracy and a hard-hitting political program, such as we had in the Democratic platform, is the answer. The American people surely proved to all doubters that the Communist fringe in this country doesn't get very many adherents even when they have a candidate for president, that can't be tagged as a Communist.

CRAIG:

Did I understand you to say that Communists in this country are not a menace?

HUMPHREY:

I said they have - this election has surely proven that they are not a menace in this country at this time.

CRAIG:

You think they're a "red herring" only?

HUMPHREY:

Oh no. I don't think they're a "red herring". We dealt with them in Minnesota and we didn't deal with them lightly. We booted them right out of a political party and told them to get into their own. And when they get into their own party we know who they are and what they are and they can't hide behind the mask of respectability.

SPIVAK:

Well, Senator, what happens to them when they get into somebody else's party?

HUMPHREY:

When they get into somebody else's party? Boot them out again.

CRAWFORD:

Senator, I'd like to break over into foreign affairs for a minute. You come from what we've considered an isolationist part of the country. You're a non-isolationist certainly. I'd like to ask you specifically how you feel about the two things that seem to be in the offing foreign affairs wise. The proposal of a Western European alliance, for example, and the rearming of Western Europe.

HUMPHREY:

Well, first of all, I would say that as far as the Western European alliance is concerned I would be in support of it.

CRAWFORD:

With us, more or less, guaranteeing it?

HUMPHREY:

With what?

CRAWFORD:

With the United States more or less guaranteeing it?

HUMPHREY:

Yes sir.

CRAWFORD:

And on rearmament?

HUMPHREY:

I'd have to know what the facts are about that. That's an issue that surely requires more than a thumbnail statement and I'm not going to make any statement on it until I have had the chance to review the evidence and to know exactly what it's all about.

SPIVAK:

Senator, during your campaign you came out for a program to freeze prices and re-establish price control. Are you also in favor of freezing wages in that case?

HUMPHREY:

Now I didn't - let's get the program straight. I came out for the President's anti-inflation program as he recommended to the Congress and I came out for the program as recommended by the Council of Economic Advisors, which is not freezing prices, which is not the re-establishment of universal price control. The program is very specific and it doesn't say what you said.

SPIVAK:

Well, are you for the re-establishment of an O.P.A.?

HUMPHREY:

I am not.

SPIVAK:

Well, are you for the re-establishing of any price control?

HUMPHREY:

I am. I support the President's anti-inflation program. It's in the Democratic Party platform.

SPIVAK:

Well, that was a fairly general one, wasn't it Senator?

HUMPHREY:

That was - as far as prices were concerned it was selective price control where items were in short supply and strong demand and where there was exorbitant profiteering. It also had for some government allocation of critically needed materials. It included what we already have now. A Consumer Credit Control and the raising of the credit reserve requirements of the Federal Reserve Board. Those were some of the items.

SPIVAK:

Well where you froze prices and had some price control would you also freeze wages or would you let wages alone in those industries?

HUMPHREY:

I would wait to see whether or not the - whether or not the wage structure compensated for the cost of living and after there was some agreement there or some meeting of the prospective - respective proportions, then there would be time to consider wage control. The job of American economy is to raise the standard of living and believe me right now wages are far below the rise in the cost of living and until that's taken up there should be no wage control.

CRAIG:

Senator, the President is in favor of universal military training. Do you favor that?

HUMPHREY:

I have not supported it. I do support the peacetime selective service. I have frankly not had enough information or enough evidence to prove the necessity of universal military training. By the way there are a dozen proposals on U.M.T. and I think that these proposals have to be considered individually and not to have anybody being put on the spot on the broad program of U.M.T. What kind do you mean?

CRAIG:

Will you follow the President?

HUMPHREY:

Will I follow him?

CRAIG:

In U.M.T. proposals?

HUMPHREY:

It depends upon what kind of a proposal he offers.

ADAMS:

Senator, I'd like to go to the Taft-Hartley Law for a minute. I understand that you favor its outright repeal. Is that correct?

HUMPHREY:

I support the Democratic platform which says its repeal and then the passage of whatever labor legislation may be necessary for sound labor-management relationships.

ADAMS:

Well now, does that mean in your opinion, going back to the Wagner Act, exactly?

HUMPHREY:

No, I think the Wagner Act is a premise or base from which we work. There may be a necessity for some changes in the Wagner Act.

ADAMS:

Then when you say repeal you really mean amendment of the Taft-Hartley Act, don't you sir?

HUMPHREY:

Well, I think we ought to get back to the repeal and get the repeal out of the way and then start going at the matter of labor-management relationships in a manner which gives some consideration to the problems that face labor and management in this country after a real study of them.

ADAMS:

Well, I'd like to get some idea of what your views are as to exactly what our labor legislation should be. Now do you think that union members have a right to know whether their officers are Communists or not?

HUMPHREY:

Yes I do.

ADAMS:

You wouldn't change that?

HUMPHREY:

I wouldn't change it. I'd also say that as long as we're going into that we might even - we might even put that in the industry, it would be a good idea.

ADAMS:

Well, that's fair enough. Now what do you think - do you think the federal government should have the right to delay strikes that threaten the national safety of the public health and welfare?

HUMPHREY:

It depends upon how you want to define the - what you want to define by national safety and public health and welfare. I think that's a very broad definition. The people that believe in free enterprise the most apparently don't believe in it in labor-management relationships. I frankly feel that if we want a free economy we're going to have to be willing to take some of the risks that come along with freedom between labor and management. That's part of the price that we have to pay.

ADAMS:

Well, then, you don't think the government really should be able to step in and stop one of these or at least delay one of these strikes?

HUMPHREY:

Oh I wouldn't be not opposed to delay.

ADAMS:

Well, that's all the Taft-Hartley Law does, isn't it?

HUMPHREY:

Well, how far do you wish to extend it?

ADAMS:

Well, you're answering the questions. How far do you wish to extend it?

HUMPHREY:

I have not had a chance to review all of that, sir.

ADAMS:

How about jurisdictional strikes and secondary boycotting?

HUMPHREY:

I think jurisdictional strikes are being worked out by a cooperative relationship in the labor movement itself and the secondary boycott, as far as that's concerned, that's been one of the weapons of the labor movement for years and I think that any hasty legislation on that should be surely turned aside. I just can't see where that's a legitimate function of this federal government to legislate in that field.

ADAMS:

Well, one final question and I'll let you off the hook on this one, Senator.

HUMPHREY:

Thank you.

ADAMS:

You feel, of course, that every man should have the legal right to belong to a union if he wants to.

HUMPHREY:

Yes sir.

ADAMS:

Now, do you think that he also has the legal right not to belong to a union if he wants to?

HUMPHREY:

Not to belong to it?

ADAMS:

Yes sir.

HUMPHREY:

Well, I believe in the union's security. I believe in the union shop. I don't believe in any free rides. These people that are in a union shop where the majority of the membership in a Democratic election vote for a union shop, that's

HUMPHREY (CONT):

what it ought to be. It ought to be a union shop.

WIGGINS:

Do you believe in the closed shop?

HUMPHREY:

Well, I don't think the closed shop is as important as the union shop, frankly. However I think the record of labor-management relationships in this country indicates that the closed shop has had an excellent record in labor-management relationships. The Typographical Union is the number one example.

CRAIG:

Then, Senator, as I see it, you would repeal the Taft-Hartley Act and then re-enact some of it again under a Democratic name?

HUMPHREY:

Under the Democratic name?

CRAIG:

Yes.

HUMPHREY:

No. I tell you what I think we ought to do is to repeal the Taft-Hartley Act, get back to the labor - the National Labor Relations Act or the Wagner-Labor Relations Act and then let us call in the representatives of labor and the conscientious representatives of American business - let's sit down and talk this out and see whether or not there's anything that needs to be done about it. I'm as convinced as I can possibly be that men of the stature of Philip Murray and William Green and the men in our Railroad Brotherhoods, Mr. Whitney and others, are just as concerned about sound labor-management relationships in this country as any member of management. Now, frankly, they didn't get too much chance to be heard when the Taft-Hartley Act was passed. They were heard but they surely weren't considered. And I don't believe in having the corporation attorneys being the advisors to the committee. If we're going to do this let's have both sides of the fence in and I

HUMPHREY (CONT):

think then we'll be able to arrive at a common agreement.

CRAIG:

Senator, there was one aspect of the Civil Rights which we did not touch on and that is the armed services. Would you abolish segregation in the armed services by a statute or would you leave that to our military authorities?

HUMPHREY:

Well, frankly, I would prefer that it be abolished by statute because after all when men are taken into the armed services they're taken in by statute and unfortunately some of the military authorities are not too imbued with the desire to move ahead even in techniques of warfare, much less social relationships.

ADAMS:

Senator, do you favor an increase in federal taxes in this coming year?

HUMPHREY:

Do I what?

ADAMS:

Favor an increase in federal taxes this coming year?

HUMPHREY:

I surely favor a re-writing of the so-called Knutson Tax Bill. He won't be down there to help write it by the way---

SPIVAK:

I'm sorry to interrupt now, Mayor Humphrey but our time is up. Our thanks go to you Mayor and Senator Humphrey for this press conference of the air and to my colleagues of the press, May Craig of the Portland-Maine Express, Phelps Adams of the New York Sun, Kenneth Crawford of Newsweek Magazine and J. R. Wiggins of the Washington Post.

Until next week this is your correspondent, Lawrence Spivak.



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