

# Labor's League for Political Education

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"WE CAN WIN IN 1950"

Speech by

SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY (D. MINN.)

at

National Conference of LLPE

Washington, D. C.

**YOU WON THE DAY—IN THE AMERICAN WAY!**  
*You have another date—November 7, 1950*

GREEN: A man who is held in high esteem by every member of the American Federation of Labor and I think every working man and woman in the United States of America, as well as their friends. One who has challenged our admiration--a devoted friend--and in this 81st Congress he has stood up immovable and uncompromising in defense of labor and labor's program. I only wish we had about 60 more senators in the United States Senate like him. The purpose of this meeting is to get a lot more in the United States Senate just like him, and we can do it if we will unite and do the job else-where as we did in Minnesota. I present to you Senator Humphrey.

HUMPHREY: Thank you very much, Mr. Green, Mr. Meany, Mr. Keenan, and friends of the American Federation of Labor, the really political action soldiers of the liberal democracy that all of us hope to see accomplished.

I came up here for several reasons. First of all, I knew that George Lawson was up here from the state of Minnesota. I always like to see George just to let him know I'm still alive. You know you never can tell. These six-year terms run out in a hurry and I thought I'd go back and see George. Then I also have friends here from Wisconsin, South Dakota, North Dakota--all that section--that mid-western section including Iowa and Illinois and so on. You know when you have a tough campaign, you can always call upon the relatives of these friends that live in other states. It's the old idea that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Not only that, I thought I ought to come up and sort of be an exhibit before I've become too tarnished and too bedraggled from the struggles down here in Washington. Because I knew that Joe or Mr. Green or George Meany over here would point to me sometime and say, "We really got in there and pitched to elect that fellow." And I wanted you to see before I was completely destroyed. You see I may be more dead and corrupt next year and I still feel somewhat fresh and unblemished thus far this year and I thought it would be a good time just to say "hello."

But I have a serious thought in mind. First of all to thank every one of you who worked so hard on behalf of those of us who were elected in this last election to this 81st Congress. I know the important part that labor played in my election out in Minnesota. And it was a very significant part. Without labor I never could have won. I know that; and I'm ever grateful. And not only that, I'm proud, very proud of the fact that I joined with the forces of labor in America for the kind of government that I think this country

ought to have and deserves to have. I'm not one of those that go around apologizing because the "labor fellows, you know, were for me." I find less criticism, more genuine cooperation, more understanding from my friends in labor than almost any other group or than any other group in our economic and political structure. Oh, we have our arguments; we don't always agree. You fellows know all about that. You ladies know about it. Even in your local unions I would gather that you have an argument once in a while.

Of course, I know that you are not going to have any argument over this little subject matter that was being talked about here just before I arrived. I've been told by Joe over here that that's in the bag. He said "Oh don't worry, Humphrey, that'll be taken care of." And Mr. Meany nodded assent and, of course, Mr. Green gave me the glance of assurance. So I can go back now up to the Hill and get all the boys together and say, "Don't worry, fellows. Everything is fixed up." Now don't let me down on this. We don't want any of those Taft-Hartley votes. You know just one vote going the wrong way on that one.

I must just give you a brief report of why I think your work will be so important in this year of 1950. I've been asked by Labor Press Associates to give a 200 word statement as to why the 81st Congress has not passed more of the Fair Deal legislation.

I started off by saying in response to your question, the simple answer is this: there's just not enough Fair Deal or people of the mind of the Fair Deal philosophy in the Congress of the United States. That's why we haven't passed more of it.

I'm not a pessimist. I think the signs of the times are good. I think the opposition is in the death throes of the inevitable struggle that they've been going through for a good long period of time. To be sure they're well organized, this opposition.

If you were in my office for a week, you could really understand the organizational tactics of the opposition. The constant flow of letters, telegrams, calls, the pressure groups, the subtle lobbies that work on every single member of those that are not too definite in their point of view, sometimes are convinced and persuaded that maybe they ought to swerve off the path of righteousness for just a little digression once in a while. Just one or two votes over here. Just to kind of fix up somebody else over on this side. Well that's part of the picture.

But the important thing to know about this Congress despite all the newspaper comment to the contrary, despite the radio commentaries to the contrary--the important thing to know is that the pattern of legislation, the driving motivating force behind this Congress

are the proposals which are being presented by the President of the United States. It's the Fair Deal program that is the center of the argument. It's not the past program; it's the Truman program. It's the liberal democratic labor program that is the driving, motivating force in this Congress.

The Committee hearings are around that program. The witnesses are called in to testify about that program. The bills are written around the objective of achieving that program. To be sure we don't always pass the bills. To be sure there's a very steadfast opposition--an opposition that is made up of conservatives in both parties--an opposition that's made up of people that are unwilling to recognize the legitimate place of labor in the American community--an opposition that is like the old French kings that they talked about--those old Bourbons. They said that they never learned anything and they never forgot anything. And there are still some people who are literally in that category.

However, I must temper my remarks by saying I think they've learned something. I don't think they've forgotten anything. They have learned that they must direct their fire upon individuals. They have learned that they must direct their fire upon specific pieces of legislation. They have learned that they must lay down a barrage of intimidation, of propoganda, of insinuation, and of distortion.

So that today terms like the "welfare state" are being held in disrepute by some people. They're being talked about all the time as if it were some calamity and I've said to the critics, well yes, I'm for the idea of a welfare state. Whate kind of a state are you for? The state of confusion? The state of inaction? The state of reaction? The state of do nothing? I believe that government is a partner with the people. And I think government and the people have a right to work together and should work together for the ever-increasing standard of living of the American people. I'm not one of those that believes, you know, that all you ought to get is the cost of living. I believe that an ordinary person ought to have the right to go fishing too. I believe that an ordinary person ought to have the right to send his children to college. I believe that an ordinary person ought to have the right to have a few little plants, a few little pieces of shrubbery, maybe a few little games and a few little toys around the yard for their children too. I think that ordinary people ought to have a decent home in which to live, not a palace necessarily but a comfortable, clean, decent home. I think they ought to have a big enough paycheck so that if they want to be a little bit foolish one or

two nights a week, they've got a right to be a little bit foolish.

Now if you want to call it the welfare state, that's OK with me. I've never been quite so sophisticated as to figure out these nice terms. All I know is that it's a happy state. It's a comfortable state in which to be, and I think we have a right to look forward to those objectives.

Now, what do we need to do to realize this. I think we ought to make our position quite clear. We're not radicals. We don't want to destroy the American system. I, for one, believe in constitutional government--I believe in government of the people and for the people. I believe in a free press, free speech and freedom of religion. I believe in all the traditional liberties upon which this country is founded. I have a complete abhorrence, a complete distaste and, let me tell you, a diabolic hatred of anything that is totalitarian. I don't like the Commies or the Communists; I don't like the facists of facism and I don't make any bones about it. I believe in a democratic system of government--with a small d--in which the people of this great nation and of this world can have a chance to say something about their lives, and the kind of conditions that are going to surround their lives.

Now, I think that's good, traditional democratic theory. I think it kind of dovetails with my religious beliefs; I think it dovetails with my ethical or moral beliefs about people and their relationships to one another.

There's a terrific struggle on however. There's a struggle on and it's been going on for years. And here's the nub of it and it's right here--we don't need to get fancy about it. There's a fight going on in this country to determine whether or not, privilege is going to rule America of people. Privilege or people, that's what it amount to. There's a fight on to determine whether or not yes, greedy selfish privilege shall control the reins of government and have their stooges to do their work. Or whether or not the rank and file of the American people are going to have people in government that are dedicated to the proposition that every man, woman and child has the right to make something out of his or her life in this country.

I've listened to this talk on the radio. I heard it the other night about how the country is going bankrupt. It's a funny thing. These people who are always talking about the country going bankrupt represent all the millionaires in the country. That's a funny thing. Have you ever thought about it? They're the ones, if you please, that saw to it that from 1940 to 1948 the big corporations of this country made 106 billions of dollars net profit after taxes. Has anybody ever

asked you what you made after taxes? They're always worrying about the budget--always worried about taxes. Of course they're worrying about taxes and they're having the ordinary people believe--the ordinary worker--the ordinary housewife--the little filling station operator--the corner drugstore man--they're getting these people to believe that if there's a tax program in this Congress or the next Congress, that it's going to be on them. You know, on the little guy. They know where the taxes will be collected if there are to be taxes.

Don't underestimate their knowledge. They know, if you please, that in a period of recession the only way that you can distribute purchasing power is through the government. They know that. And they know what the income tax means. They know what corporation taxes mean. What excess profit taxes mean. And believe me, while they're not talking about that sort of thing around here, they know what it means. They're trying to tell you and all of your friends and all of your members. "Look you people are going to be taxed right out of existence by these liberals up here in Congress." No. You know that's the old game of going around patting someone on the shoulders right here in front while they get ready to kick them in the pants from behind.

Well I just mention these things because I think we've got to get on the offensive, friends. I think we've got to make up our minds if we've been on the right path. We were on the right path with TVA. We were on the right path with social security. We were on the right path with price supports for farmers. We were on the right path, if you please, with hot school lunches for children. We were on the right path when we built highways and bridges in this country and public buildings and public centers. We were on the right path in America when we extended the helping hand of government to the impoverished and the poor. We were on the right path when we gave to labor the right of free collective bargaining.

We were on the right path, and they don't like it. And I'll tell you why they don't like it. Even though they get rich, even though they are the powerful, the mighty and the handful of special privilege boys. They never made more in their lives. They made it under Roosevelt too. The only reason they didn't like it was they didn't make it under their terms. They didn't have control over the spogot even though we kept the spigot open for them. They were afraid we might turn it off. That's what it amounts to. They are men of little faith.

Apparently they don't understand that we too are interested in a good living. Apparently these people don't understand that we too like new cars. That we

want to go to the beach. That we'd even like to own a yacht. We're just like they are. We haven't been quite so lucky in the sense that we want the good things of life.

And I submit to the business community of America and I say this--and I said it to them right here in the same hotel--that American business, particularly American corporation leadership better start to have some faith in the American people because every time American business has lack of faith in the American people, the American people have lack of faith in corporation business. That's just the way it ends up.

Well, there's no panacea--it's hard work. You know it. This is wonderful, what's happening here. And listen, if we'd had this in 1945, we wouldn't have had the 80th Congress in 1946. You know you can't expect to run a high fever--you can't expect to be economically and politically sick for two years plus the fact of a world war--five years before that--for five years--plus the fact ten years of depression prior to that--and expect the 81st Congress to remedy everything in six months. Can't be done. Plus the fact when you don't have some of the right doctors in the 81st Congress.

So we're going to have to do a little changing. Not much--gee, the job isn't big this time, folks. It isn't like having to clean out 50 or 60 in the Senate--you couldn't if you wanted to as there's only 32 that'll come up each time. We ought to have remembered that the last time. We came out of that last election and, oh boy everything's wonderful, we had a great big victory when the fact was that we only had one-third of the Senate up for election. We had a big victory in the House, but in some areas in the House of Representatives where the members ran they didn't have opposition. You You know that. We're got to find opposition candidates for people that deserve to be opposed.

And as I heard Joe Keenan say last night: you don't have to have someone who is a well-known politician. It's better that you don't. Get some young fellow that's just got the drive, and the rip, and the go and the damnable determination to go out and give someone a hell of a licking. And when you've got that, then you are going to have a victory. At least you're sure going to scare somebody. And that sometimes is almost as good. A lot of people have been converted you know, as they are on their death bed. They get very Holy.

Now how about the Senate? What do you need to do in the Senate? What we need in the Senate is just about 5 or 6---give us 6 more--give us 6 more good senators----6 more Senators that will work like some of your freshmen senators worked this year--6 more senators who will go out and carry the ball, for example as old Claude Pepper did from down Florida, or Jim Murray from out in Montana. Six more senators that will

do the kind of a job that Paul Douglas has done out there in Illinois. Six more senators that will do like Estes Kefauver from Tennessee and I can go right around--I've missed some of them. Like Frank Graham from North Carolina. I've only mentioned those I know intimately and so well--or six more that will get in there and work as hard as Senator Matt Neely from West Virginia. Those kind of folks you know.

You get six more like that and I'll tell you what's going to happen to the Taft bill. We left Hartley somewhere in the shuffle. He started writing books. I'll tell you what'll happen to the Taft bill. It won't be our side that will be worrying about where we're going to get the votes, it'll be their side. And we should not have to worry ourselves to death. A handful of us work ourselves half to death. But we'll have the votes. I want to tell you something, folks. When you haven't got the votes, you haven't got the votes.

And I want to tell you another thing it's a lot easier to have a friend in the Congress that you don't have to be seeing every minute and writing and calling and wiring every minute than to have somebody in there that you have to write, call, wine and dine with--and after it's all through he tells you to go take a sneeze and goes and votes the other way anyhow. Isn't that right? That's the practical politics--maybe not so statesmanlike but we're talking politics today.

I want to submit to you friends that the only kind of politics that pays is winning politics. The only kind of politics that's going to do the job this country needs is the kind of politics that will actually put the people in the Congress in the United States that is going to represent the great rank and file of our American people.

And you can do it. And you'll do it in 1950. You've got to do it. You've got to do it for yourself. You have to do it for the country. I think you have to do it for the world. I think the eyes of the world are upon America today.

Mr. Meany just came back from Geneva. The hope of the free trade union movement in this world rests upon a stable, strong prosperous liberal America. And we've got a stake in the lives of these people all over the world just like you've got a stake in your own life. And I know that you're going to do it, but you can't do it alone. You know I used to tell my class, I used to teach political science at a very fine Christian school. Now I said let me tell you something. I believe in the power of prayer. And I do. But I said that I want to tell you don't expect the Lord to do all of your work; he needs a little help once in a while. And I know that we should take our responsibilities very seriously--our spiritual responsibilities too.

Now let's get out and do the job at the precinct level. Let's get the people registered. Let's get them registered now. Let's not wait until October 1950 that's too late. It takes time. It takes time to beat propoganda of the opposition. It takes time to get your own people stimulated. It takes time to get your own locals, if you please, your own central bodies, your own state federations to understand that this is a crucial struggle and the year 1950 is pay dirt--that's it.

We're right now at that middle balance--right in there anything can happen and we can fall on either side of the wall. We can either fall into the ditch of reaction; or you can move on over into the green pastures of prosperous democracy. I prefer, like Ferdinand to be over in the pasture.

I want to thank you very much for your time. Your wonderful president, Mr. Green who is my personal and close friend, for which I am very, very grateful and I hold him in the highest personal esteem. I'll never forget that great speech he gave out there in the auditorium in Minneapolis--boy we knocked them over that night--you did, I mean. You knocked them over that night; and I got the votes. I shall never forget the many courtesies which he has extended to me since I've been here in the Senate nor shall I forget the fact that he has never once asked me for a single favor--not once.

I can honestly say that my friends in labor have not asked me for anything. They know, if you please, that if I live up to my pledges, my promises and my convictions, you don't have to ask. They will be forthcoming, gladly, Thank you very much.



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