

JANUARY 31, 1950
597th BROADCAST

Town Meeting



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BULLETIN OF AMERICA'S TOWN MEETING OF THE AIR

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Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.

Should President Truman's Civil Rights Program Be Adopted?

Moderator, **GEORGE V. DENNY, Jr.**

Speakers

HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

JOHN C. STENNIS

(See also page 12)

COMING

February 7, 1950

How Can We Be Successful Parents?

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CONTENTS

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THE BROADCAST OF JANUARY 31:

"Should President Truman's Civil Rights Program Be Adopted?"

Mr. DENNY.....	3
Senator HUMPHREY.....	4
Senator STENNIS.....	6
QUESTIONS, PLEASE!.....	9
THE SPEAKERS' COLUMN.....	12

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THE BROADCAST OF FEBRUARY 7:

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Town Meeting



BULLETIN OF AMERICA'S TOWN MEETING OF THE AIR

GEORGE V. DENNY, JR., MODERATOR



JANUARY 31, 1950

VOL. 15, No. 40

Should President Truman's Civil Rights Program Be Adopted?

Announcer:

We are frequently asked the question, "How is Town Meeting supported?" Basically, the answer is "through advertising," for part of the cost is borne by the American Broadcasting Company and part by local sponsors who believe in the Town Meeting as a great American institution which is helping the American people to find the right answers to our common problems. For instance, here is part of a letter from the general manager of the *Daily Pantagraph* of Bloomington, Illinois, one of 14 daily newspapers which have sponsored Town Meeting ever since it became available for local sponsorship three years ago.

"The folks here at the *Pantagraph* are well pleased with our three-year sponsorship of Town Meeting. We think it's a natural for newspaper sponsorship, and we're quite firmly convinced that Town Meeting sponsorship has become an important contributing factor in helping us to build the largest circulation in *Pantagraph* history."

Why not inquire about sponsorship from your local ABC Station manager tomorrow? Now, to preside over our discussion here is your moderator, the president of Town Hall and founder of America's Town Meeting, George V. Denny, Jr. Mr. Denny. (Applause)

Moderator Denny:

Good evening, neighbors. Followers of Town Meeting will recall that we've discussed this question in one form or another nearly every year since we've been on the air.

Tonight, on the eve of the Senate debate on this question, we bring you two distinguished Senators who will take an active

part in this debate, which is causing a greater furor than any other subject since our entrance into the war in 1917.

President Truman insists that his four-point civil rights program be adopted in its entirety. The four points are:

1. The right of equal treatment for all races in the armed forces.
2. Legislation to abolish the poll tax.
3. Effective anti-lynch law.
4. Fair employment practices legislation.

The opponents, principally the Southern Democrats, are equally adamant in their opposition. Our first speaker is Senator Hubert Humphrey, Democrat of Minnesota, who has been an advocate of the President's civil rights program ever since he became active in national politics and helped to draft this plank in the Democratic platform. Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota. Senator Humphrey. (*Applause*)

Senator Humphrey:

Mr. Denny, Senator Stennis. Should President Truman's Civil Rights Program Be Adopted? My answer is definitely, "Yes."

This is a significant and a very symbolic year. Fourscore and seven years ago, on January 1, 1863, a noble American and a beloved President issued for his day and for the pages of world history the emancipation proclamation.

Yes, fourscore and seven years ago, on November 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln, standing bareheaded at Gettysburg, rededicated our Nation "to the proposition that all men are created equal."

It is with this challenge and in this historical heritage that we ask the question again tonight—"Should President Truman's Civil Rights Program Be Adopted?" Again, my answer is, "Yes."

The facts of international politics, our commitments under the terms of the Charter of the United Nations, the moral obligation of our own democratic political faith, the economic and political needs of our times call upon the Congress of the United States to fulfill the pledges given to the American people on the issue of civil rights legislation.

All over this land, the people of America in their churches—Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish—in their trade unions—A. F. L., C. I. O.—in their clubs and fraternal organizations, in their farm coöperatives, through their state and city FEPC laws, and their state and city civil rights commissions are telling the Congress, "Enact civil rights legislation."

Yes, the people are saying to the Congress that we, the people,

are more concerned about applying the Golden Rule than in preserving a Senate rule—the unfair rule to filibuster.

The preservation of human rights, then, is the paramount issue of our generation—the extension and the guarantee of human rights. Yes, basic civil rights is the core of our struggle with communist totalitarian forces.

The issue of civil rights penetrates our foreign policy, and I submit that it adulterates our domestic policy. By our failure to guarantee basic civil liberties to our own people, we are denying acceptance here at home in America of the principles of human equality.

The struggle, the cold war—this costly cold war—in which we are now engaged, is one essentially for men's minds. Human respect, understanding, affection cannot be purchased by loans and gifts and grants of money.

A unity of freedom-loving people cannot be molded by the mere show of power and military might. The intangibles of human freedom, of human equality and individual dignity are the only real forces and weapons on the side of freedom and democracy.

I say we dare not ignore these vital forces. We need them in Asia, in Africa, and in South America.

Yes, our moral standing, our political standing in the eyes of the free world hinge pretty much on whether or not we pass civil rights legislation. Here at home, we jeopardize our economic strength if we deny people an opportunity for employment because of such false standards as race, creed, or color.

We weaken our natural strength in direct proportion to the number of people that we discriminate against, either in their exercise of political liberties or economic opportunities.

The report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights calls for an end to discrimination.

The Democratic party and the Republican party, their candidates for the office of President, pledged action on the issue of civil rights. I call, then, upon the Republican party and the Democratic party to come clean on this issue of civil rights and to support the President.

The issue of civil rights should not be a partisan matter. The issue and the passage of civil rights legislation is a bipartisan obligation. The problem, then, of discrimination is present in all sections of our country. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the National Government to establish on a nationwide basis a basic standard for human rights.

The Congress of the United States has the responsibility of protecting and extending the democratic way of life. That way

of life is being challenged today by bigotry, intolerance, and discrimination, not only in foreign areas, but also right here in America.

A government which can appropriate billions of dollars to fight antidemocratic forces in Europe and Asia should have the courage and the honor to dedicate a majority of votes in Congress for the extension of democracy at home. (*Applause*)

Moderator Denny:

Thank you, Senator Humphrey. We regret that illness has prevented Senator Ellender of Louisiana from being with us tonight, but we are very happy to welcome Senator John C. Stennis, Democrat of Mississippi, to speak in his place. Senator Stennis has made the opening speech and was among those who led the fight against this legislation when it was last debated in the Senate in 1948, and will play a similar role when this issue reaches the Senate floor in this session. We are happy to welcome to Town Meeting Senator John Stennis of Mississippi. Senator Stennis. (*Applause*)

Senator Stennis:

Mr. Moderator, Senator Humphrey, and friends. No one ever told me which side I was to take in this debate. Senator Humphrey took the affirmative. That leaves me the negative. I've been in the Senate just two years. I've made a very close study of our domestic problems and our foreign problems. I spent two months in Europe last fall. The thing, above all else, that I am convinced of is that America's mission in the world for the next 10 or 15 years is primarily to preserve and to maintain constitutional government.

My position is that if that Constitution is defective, then amend it, but not run over it. I believe that these bills, as noble as some of their purposes are, do run over that Constitution.

Senator Humphrey said the other day on the floor of the Senate that our moral standing in the eyes of the world depended on the passage of this legislation.

Friends, I spent 60 days recently in Europe. Every person over there, unless they're tied by family ties, wants to come somewhere. Where? To America.

I heard no complaint over there about our laws, our poll tax laws, our FEPC, or bills of that kind. The only laws I heard complained of over there were our immigration laws.

I think these civil rights bills—so called—are misnamed. They create no rights. They destroy many rights. They create no equality. They create much strife.

They should be called "political pressure bills" because they force their way into each major party, not on their merits, but through sheer political force.

I'm going to have to confine my remarks to just one of them in the opening here. Specifically, just what does this FEPC bill mean? They use the word "fair." I believe I can prove to you that it's not fair. They use the word "employment." I believe I can show you it does not create one bit of employment except for a horde of federal agents that will go out over the country poking their noses into other people's business looking for some kind of an excuse to prosecute someone because some other individuals think they've been fired or failed to be hired or failed to be promoted because of their religion or their national origin.

Now, this bill is tremendous in its scope. It applies to farmers, merchants, shopkeepers, businessmen, manufacturers who employ 50 or more people. The old bill said anyone that employed over six.

Senator Humphrey has told you what it means to those within the minority groups. I'm going to tell you what it means to just the plain old average common-garden variety of American who is found throughout the great length and breadth of this land.

He's a pretty good fellow. He has a job. There are 60 on that job. The employer has to reduce his forces and calls in ten to discharge them. The lawyer of that employer tells him, "If you discharge these people here—some aliens, some of barest minority groups—they may prosecute you. But this old average American fellow here who doesn't belong to any of those minority groups, you can discharge him without taking any chance of his prosecuting you."

A man that's on the dividing line, who do you think that he's going to discharge?

That's the way out. That's the practical effect; getting away from a theory, that's the practical effect of the operation of this bill.

Now, I wish I had more time, but friends, my idea is this: Let's improve everything that we can, but let's maintain constitutional government. I think we have the remedy anyway. In less than 150 years, we've become the greatest, most powerful Nation in the world. We've taken in people from all climes, from all flags, with all kinds of educational backgrounds. We've given them decent places to live and chances to advance. We're not perfect, but we are making tremendous strides of progress.

That race of people that lives with me in the South has made more progress and come faster and done more in a short length

of time than any people—white, brown, yellow, or any other color—that ever lived in the history of the world. I'm proud of their fine record. (*Applause*)

Moderator Denny:

Thank you, Senator Stennis. Now in just a few moments we'll have questions from our audience, but while we get ready for the questions, here is a message for our Town Hall listeners.

Announcer:

Are you, like most of us, slightly bewildered by the many problems we face today? Yes, it's quite true that no people in all the recorded history have ever faced so many and varied problems as the American people face today, yet we enjoy more freedom and prosperity than any other people.

To maintain this freedom and prosperity, then, we must find the right answers to our problems.

By bringing you the ablest leaders and advocates of different points of view on the great questions before us, your Town Meeting strives to help you find the right answers to problems such as the one we're facing here tonight.

Why not help your Town Hall advance the cause of freedom and democracy by organizing a listening-discussion group in your own home, school, or club, and remind your friends to listen to Town Meeting each Tuesday night at this hour. Town Meeting listeners make good American citizens.

Now, our Town Meeting audience is ready with their questions, so for our question period we return you to Mr. Denny.

QUESTIONS, PLEASE!

Mr. Denny: To start our question period tonight, we're going to let the Senators ask a question of each other. First, Senator Humphrey.

Senator Humphrey: Mr. Denny, I would like to ask my colleague in the Senate, Senator Stennis, this question: As I understood from his remarks, he called the Fair Employment Practices measure and other civil rights measures political pressure bills, and said that these bills were being sponsored by highly organized minority groups.

Now I want to ask the Senator this: Does he consider the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ of America, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, the Synagogue Alliance, the Northern Baptist Convention, the American Federation of Labor, the General Council of Congregational Christian Churches, and a host of other organizations as what you might call minority groups and minority pressures, or does he consider them to be the Americans that he was talking about in the concluding remarks of his address? (*Applause*)

Senator Stennis: You've named some very fine organizations there. I think the real situation is that the real story about both sides in the operation of these bills has never been fully disclosed to the American people. They have not been issues in political campaigns, and been debated. Therefore, a great number of people — high-minded people, noble people — have been led in supporting them without appreciating their far-reaching implications. (*Applause*)

Mr. Denny: Thank you, very much. But, Senator, have you got a question for Senator Humphrey?

Senator Stennis: I want to ask Senator Humphrey this. He emphasizes this "no discrimination" in the FEPC Bill. Now I want to ask him why he didn't undertake to rattle with the worst problem of discrimination that we have and that is on account of sex; another on account of age. On another why did he exempt all these non-profit organizations? Why did he exempt all the employers that employ less than 50 people? Was it to get their support? Just give us reasons, if he will.

Senator Humphrey: Well, may I say to my distinguished colleague from Mississippi that the bill that we're discussing is the Fair Employment Practices Bill which deals with discrimination in employment because of race, color, or creed, or ancestry. I would also point out that insofar as discrimination on the basis

of sex we had an amendment up before the Senate on that, and the Junior Senator from Mississippi voted for equal rights for American women.

Insofar as the limitation upon sectarian groups, nonprofit organizations, and charitable organizations—the distinguished Senator from Mississippi knows that that is standard practice in all federal law, for example, under the Wage and Hours Act, and under the Internal Revenue Act. Nonprofit, charitable, educational organizations are exempt under the terms of the Act.

Now, in reference to the number—why we have 50 instead of fewer as in the original bill. That was to eliminate a certain amount of detailed administration. It was an effort to broaden this out on the basis of the firms or industries or organizations that have interstate operations.

I remind my colleague from Mississippi that this bill applies only to those instruments or those agencies, private or public, which deal in interstate operations and not intrastate. Therefore, the number was limited to 50 employees, or over. Therefore, the charitable and nonprofit groups were exempted, which I repeat is a standard practice in all federal legislation. (Applause)

Mr. Denny: Thank you. Now, the first audience question from the gentleman in the brown suit. Yes, sir?

Man: My question is directed to Senator Stennis. If the civil rights program is not adopted, will we be planting the same seeds of communism in our country as the Romanoffs planted in Russia, that brought communism to that country and now to China?

Senator Stennis: Absolutely not, sir. I think I've already answered that question. Everybody in Europe—Communists and all the rest of them—are wanting to come to America now. This is the greatest country in the world and they know it.

Mr. Denny: Thank you. Next question.

Man: My question is directed to Senator Humphrey. Is it true that education alone is not sufficient to bring about changes in people's opinions and, therefore, legislation is necessary?

Senator Humphrey: I think it would be unwise for us to try to eliminate or, let me say, to segregate the problem of education from the whole program of civil rights legislation. To be sure, we need continuing education in the field of human relations, but I remind the gentleman who asked me the question that education, alone, without sanctions—that is, without enforceable procedures in the law—is not satisfactory.

For example, public education in this country, without the

ability to have the truant officer, if you please, must not be a very successful enterprise.

Even though we rely on people to voluntarily send in their income taxes we have the penalties for that minority, if you please, of people who are so antisocial that they do not pay their taxes. That's true in all kinds of legislation. (Applause)

Mr. Denny: Thank you. The man down here.

Man: Senator Humphrey. Don't you agree that the spreading out of the wealth, the know-how, and the general education is the solution?

Mr. Denny: Well, now that's another whole subject, my friend. I'm afraid that isn't on tonight's subject, really. You're bringing in Point 4. All right. Take the question from the gentleman on the aisle.

Man: Senator Stennis. What immediate first step would you take in your own State of Mississippi to lift the Negro population up to the economic standard of the white population in that state?

Senator Stennis: That's a very fair question and I'm very happy to say that the strides in the direction of the colored race, economically, have been tremendous there, particularly in the last 10 or 12 years, and I'm glad to see it happen. (Applause)

Mr. Denny: Thank you. All right, Senator Humphrey.

Senator Humphrey: I would just like to reconfirm Senator Stennis' statement that it's perfectly true there have been tremendous strides made in the Southern States in the elevation of economic opportunity and political opportunity for the people of the so-called colored race.

I think, however, what we need to remember is that, while these strides are being made, the helping hand of the Federal Government establishing a basic national policy makes it all the easier for men of the conviction of Senator Stennis, who is a humanitarian, to do a better job back in his own state. (Applause)

Mr. Denny: Thank you.

Man: Senator Stennis. Assuming that the FEPC Bill is passed, what would happen if a complaint were filed under the FEPC Bill?

Senator Stennis: Well, I'm certainly glad you asked that question. If someone was discharged and he thought it was due to his race, or his religion, or because he was an alien, he would call in the examiner. This examiner would get the employer up, and he would take evidence, but there'd be no jury. The employer could be tried anywhere—even 500 miles from where his factory or his home was. If this one examiner acting as judge, jury, and prosecutor, or commissioner found him guilty, then he'd have to

appeal to the Circuit Court of Appeals or the Federal District, sitting maybe five or six hundred miles from there. No jury again.

Examine the evidence and, if there was any substantial evidence at all to sustain, it would be affirmed, and then they would really put the hot iron to the employer. They'd tell him that he had to do certain things. He might have to employ that person and pay him back pay, or they might not require him to pay back pay. It would be in the form of an injunction, and if he violated that injunction, of course, he would go to jail.

I say that it does not comply with the Constitution. It abrogates all of our basic American principles of judicial processes—trial by jury, etc. (*Applause*)

THE SPEAKERS' COLUMN

JOHN CORNELIUS STENNIS—Democratic Senator from Mississippi, John Stennis was born in Kemper County, Miss., in 1901. He has a B.S. degree from Mississippi State College and an LL.B. from University of Virginia Law School. From 1928 to 1932, Senator Stennis was a member of the Mississippi House of Representatives. In 1931 and 1935, he was elected district prosecuting attorney. In 1937, he was appointed circuit judge, and elected in 1938, 1942, and 1946.

In 1947, Senator Stennis was elected to the U. S. Senate to fill the unexpired term of the late T. G. Bilbo. He was reelected in the election last fall.

HUBERT H. HUMPHREY—A Democrat from Minnesota, Senator Humphrey is a member of the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee and the Committee on Expenditures in Executive Departments.

As Mayor of Minneapolis, Mr. Humphrey was one of the youngest men ever to hold that office. Born in Wallace, South Dakota, in 1911, he studied for a year at the Denver College of Pharmacy and was a pharmacist with the Humphrey Drug Co., in Huron, South Dakota, for four years. Enrolling at the University of Minnesota, he received an A.B. degree in 1939. He became an assistant instructor of political science at the University of Louisiana, and also studied for a master's degree which he received in 1940.

After a year of teaching at the University of Minnesota, Mr. Humphrey became a member of the administrative staff of WPA and later was head of the state division. He was assistant state supervisor of adult education and assistant regional director of the War Manpower Commission. He has taught political science at Macalester College in St. Paul.

In 1945, Mr. Humphrey became Mayor of Minneapolis and was also chosen Outstanding Young Man of the State. He has been active in politics and in many fields of civic betterment. He was elected to his seat in the Senate in November, 1948.

Mr. Denny: Thank you. Senator Humphrey says he wants to comment on that.

Senator Humphrey: I do want to comment on it because I think we need a process of education on Fair Employment Practices legislation. Let me recite to you what would happen either under the present House bill or the Senate bill which will be up for consideration.

First of all, the emphasis in the bill is upon adjudication by the processes of persuasion, conciliation, mediation, and education. I want to point out that every single state officer of a Fair Employment Practices Commission that testified before the House Committee emphasized the importance of what we call the conciliation process on any problem of discrimination in employment.

Now, what was the record during the war? Under the President's Fair Employment Practices Commission, the record was that 68 per cent of the cases of charged discrimination were eliminated as having no basis of fact. The other better than 30 per cent were adjudicated. Remember this Commission didn't even have enforcement powers, and yet, down in the State of Alabama, the editorial writers in Birmingham and in other cities praised the work of the FEPC on the basis that it settled these problems without undue interference.

Now, I repeat, that even here in the State of New York, where you have a state FEPC, your use of enforcement is at a basic minimum. I doubt if it has ever been used even to enforce, and yet you have a remarkable record of progress.

So you have conciliation, arbitration, mediation, education, and, by the way, you have weeks of it—in fact, months of it—before you ever once even attempt to have what you call the punitive aspects of the law used upon the employer or the trade union in an effort to eliminate the discriminatory practice.

Mr. Denny: Thank you.

Lady: I'm addressing Senator Stennis. I would like to know what can be done to stop the Southern Congressmen from filibustering the civil rights law every time it comes up for a vote. Are we still going to fight the Civil War?

Senator Stennis: In parliamentary language, that term you use there means a prolonged debate for the enlightenment of the people. We tell them now that in the only state that I know of where this FEPC bill was voted on—California—they voted it down over three to one—by more than a million votes. It did not carry in a single county in that state.

In my friend Senator Humphrey's state, the State Senate voted

it down 34 to 29, and they sent it to the House Committee, and the bill never has been heard of since.

These debates—you can call it filibuster if you want to—are the only thing that bring these matters to the attention of the American public. They have a right to know.

Mr. Denny: Thank you.

Man: Senator Humphrey. Is it not true that neither the Republicans nor the Democrats, as parties, really desire FEPC, etc.? Is not this based on the premise that government decrees in legislation do not overrule personal prejudice—and I may add as an addenda—or personal political advantage?

Senator Humphrey: I'm very glad to answer the gentleman's question. I am sure the emphasis was on the last phrase—personal political advantage. I think that was the portent of the question.

I submit to the gentleman that as to the Democratic party and the Republican party, we must accept their pronouncements on the basis of good faith, and I think they both want to pass civil rights legislation. I think they both *better* want to pass civil rights legislation, because if they don't there may be a change in the political complexion of the United States, and in the political attitudes.

Now in reference to the other final point. I think it should be clearly understood that these are not laws to eliminate prejudice. Prejudices are in the minds of men. You cannot eliminate prejudice by law, but you can eliminate the overt acts of prejudice. You can eliminate the actions of a prejudiced mind. You can control them. (*Applause*)

What these bills attempt to do is to circumscribe and to eliminate and to control the acts of bigotry and prejudice in the hope that education, a good clean conscience, or a little meditation will do something to clean up the prejudiced mind which is the basic problem. (*Applause*)

Mr. Denny: Thank you, Senator Humphrey and Senator Stennis. Now in just a moment I'll tell you about our program for next week.

Announcer: Each week, more Town Meeting listeners decide to have the Town Meeting Bulletin come to them regularly through the mail. It's a great convenience just in case you miss one; then you are sure to have a record of the particular program you want to refer to or to pass on to a friend.

Why not try a sample subscription for the next 11 consecutive issues for one dollar, which you can slip into an envelope and send together with your name and address to Town Hall, New

York 18, New York? Or, if you'd like to have these bulletins come to you for an entire year, send \$4.50.

In case you want only a copy of tonight's discussion, enclose 10 cents in coin, not stamps, and allow about two weeks for delivery. The address is Town Hall, New York 18, New York.

If you have an opinion on tonight's question, please send it to the same address. A digest of your opinions will be sent to the proper committee in the House and Senate.

Now, to tell you about next week's program, here is Mr. Denny.

Special Offer

Dear Subscriber:

We are happy to offer you an unusual opportunity. Miss Dorothy Thompson, who lectured at Town Hall on January 21, has given us permission to print her address entitled "Our World Today."

Her analysis of the world situation today is so brilliant that we thought our bulletin subscribers would appreciate a chance to purchase mimeographed copies of it. We are proud to make this offer because it illustrates Town Hall's purpose: to provide people with information so that they can make an intelligent analysis of vitally important problems and form their own independent judgments.

If you would like to order one or more copies of "Our World Today," at 25c per copy, please fill out and return the order blank below.

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Mr. Denny: Two weeks ago, we invited your opinions on the subject, "Is the Kremlin's Aim the Conquest of the U. S. A.?" Although the response was light, of those opinions expressed, 76 per cent said, "Yes," and 24 per cent said, "No."

Now, next week, we return to a very personal question: "How Can We Be Successful Parents?" Our speakers will be John Mason Brown, author and lecturer, and Maisie Ward Sheed, publisher and lecturer.

So plan to be with us next week and every week at the sound of the Crier's bell! Town Meeting next week! Everybody listen!



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