

ADDRESS OF HON. HUBERT H. HUMPHREY,
UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM MINNESOTA,
JEFFERSON-JACKSON DINNER, FAIRMONT
HOTEL, SAN FRANCISCO, SATURDAY,
SEPTEMBER 21, 1957

FOR RELEASE:
SUNDAY A.M. PAPERS

FAILURES AND FOIBLES OF IKE AND THE GOP

It's great to be back among my good friends in northern California. It's even greater to see the new spirit of enthusiasm growing among Democrats in California -- and to sense victory in the air for 1958.

Let me share a secret with you. That same spirit is sweeping the country -- and it's sent rock-ribbed Republicans scurrying out of Washington to the hustings all over the land.

You're getting your share of it in California these days. But it looks to me like panic has hit the Republican ranks. They're as split up in California as they are in Washington, where nobody knows just what the Republican Party stands for these days, modern or otherwise.

There's good reason for the Republican panic.

We opened the political season a bit early for them, with Bill Proxmire's knockout punch to the Grouchy Old Party in Wisconsin. We gave them an advance look at what's in store in 1958.

Wisconsin's voters turned their backs on Absentee Ike, the President who'd rather be popular than right.

They bluntly repudiated do-nothing Ezra Taft Benson, the Secretary in charge of liquidating Agriculture.

They turned where voters always turn when they are in trouble and need vigorous, progressive, constructive leadership -- they turned back in droves to the Democratic Party.

After what happened in Wisconsin, even some of our most rock-ribbed Republicans are awakening to the fact that people want a change in the political climate in Washington.

You can help give it to them, by changing the political climate in California.

There's really no use choosing up sides in this Knowland-Knight squabble. You can retire both of them at the same time, and let them continue their feud in private -- instead of at public expense. Perhaps you can't take care of Dick Nixon until 1960, but his turn will come.

We need a Democrat as governor in your state capitol, to join the growing ranks of vigorous young Democratic governors all over the country.

We need a California Democrat in the United States Senate, to further strengthen the growing forces of liberal young leadership with which we Democrats are blessed.

You've got the men to do it, and you have the spirit it takes. You face a challenging opportunity that cannot be missed, now that Ike's coattails have been worn so thin.

(more)

Poor Ike is having a hard time these days.

Since a so-called "Modern Republican" lost that Senatorial election in Wisconsin, Ike's about as popular as the Asian flu with most Republican regulars.

We're getting an assist from the Republicans themselves, as they scurry from Ike's sinking ship.

Congressman Richard Simpson of Pennsylvania, chairman of the Republicans' Congressional Campaign Committee, told the truth for once when he blamed the humiliating Republican defeat in Wisconsin on "inept leadership" from the White House. He suggests that Republicans avoid Eisenhower's coattails like the plague. My, how times change!

Things have got so bad in Washington that Republicans are singing a new theme song. Perhaps it will be spreading around the country soon. It goes something like this:

"I got along without him before I met him,
"And I can get along without him now.
"I think that I'm twice as cute as he,
"And I didn't like him anyhow.
"Ike ran around with every guy in town;
"He didn't care how much we let him down.
"I got along without him before I met him,
"And I can get along without him now."

As far as I'm concerned, of course, that's still just whistling in the political graveyard. Because the truth is, Republicans can't seem to get along either with Ike, or without him.

Best They Have

That's really a shame -- because as weak a President as Ike has been, it's true that he's the best the Republicans have been able to produce in a long time -- and far better than anything they have to offer for the future.

It is also sadly true that Ike was of little help to those of us in Congress, either Democrat or Republican, who looked to the President for the leadership we had a right to expect in the struggles of the past session -- for the urgently needed school construction bill, for adequate defense and foreign aid expenditures, and, yes, even for an effective civil rights bill to which the Republicans are giving such lip-service these days.

Always, at the crucial moment, President Eisenhower has been absent, silent, **uninformed**, or uncertain about what he wanted.

The Republicans walked out on their own earlier recommendations for tax relief for small business.

The Republican Administration couldn't make up its mind what to do about America's collapsing farm economy, except keep Ezra Benson making speeches against the farmers all over the country.

Ike couldn't decide whether he was for economy or against it, and he couldn't even keep his own cabinet in line in support of his White House budget.

(more)

Of course, his cabinet did try to follow Ike's example during the recent critical session of Congress -- they spent as little time on the job as possible, and always managed to be at the wrong place at the wrong time.

When we faced our showdown fight for a meaningful civil rights bill, Attorney General Brownell was right on the cricket line -- in London.

When we in Congress sought to bring Secretary of Agriculture Benson before our committees to find out what he was doing to the REA, we found him hiding out in the forests of Idaho. He just took a little 52-day jaunt away from Washington, until Congress went home.

Of course, I suppose I shouldn't complain. Farm prices took their only upturn, while Benson was hiding out. Perhaps our farmers would be better off if he would just stay away from Washington all the time.

In fact, during the final weeks of the recent session when Congress was trying to complete action on legislation essential to our country, every cabinet member but three were away from the capitol.

The Secretary of the Navy remained on the job. He was busy with some infighting with the rest of our armed services.

The Postmaster General was on the job, too. He had to stay in Washington to make sure our postal workers didn't get a raise.

It might be amusing, if it wasn't so tragic.

Our nation begs for leadership. We need a president who will exercise his responsibilities, not just exercise.

We need a President with the courage to make decisions -- whether they are popular with everyone or not,

Paying Costly Price

The nation is paying a costly price for collapse of the President's leadership, at home and abroad -- in Syria, or in Arkansas.

Fumbling, bungling indecision has marked our handling of both foreign and domestic affairs. As a nation, we face grave risks in both fields from abuse, misuse, or lack of use of Presidential power.

On the foreign front, the Administration continues to rely on headlines and bylines, rather than careful diplomacy and sound foreign economic policy. They seek to substitute the checkbook and money roll for effective statesmanship aimed at close cooperation with our allies and leadership toward some solution of international problems in the United Nations.

On the home front, we face the same failure of leadership.

Outbreak of Lawlessness

During recent weeks, we have seen an outbreak of lawlessness and violence that is all the more terrifying because it is directed against children. Extremists have been allowed to take the law into their own hands. School children have been stoned, and a school in Nashville has been bombed.

(more)

Law-abiding people everywhere, North and South, whatever their feelings about the wisdom of the Supreme Court's school desegregation program, have been shocked by the ability of a small fraction of our people to ride roughshod over the great majority.

In the hearts of millions of Americans today echoes the same cry of anguish so effectively voiced by Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong: What's wrong with my country?"

Perhaps, worst of all, in our need to act quickly to control the outbreaks of violence, we have received no guidance from the man to whom we must look first in time of national crisis.

As the forces of disorder and defiance grew stronger and more confident, our President has offered us no leadership -- no firm base around which to rally in defense of the law.

It couldn't have happened under an Andy Jackson.

It couldn't have happened under a Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

It couldn't have happened under a Harry S. Truman.

Perhaps Walter Lippmann best phrased the dilemma with which we have been faced in these troubled weeks when he wrote:

"The situation is one in which the whole climate could be changed by a President who took command, who spoke clearly, in no uncertain terms, to the patriotism, the common sense, and the good will of the people. There ought to be somebody around whom the nation can rally with confidence, rising above the passion of this envenomed struggle. But at present there is nobody who is unmistakably in command, nobody who is speaking clearly, nobody who is really working seriously to bring order, plan, purpose, and control into what is in fact a drift into disorder."

We in Congress have watched the meanderings of our rudderless ship of state with ever-growing concern.

But none of the President's silence and evasion have been so tragic in their consequences as those during the last four weeks -- when the whole country has searched desperately for leadership against the forces of lawlessness -- and has found none.

Could Have Been Prevented

I say tonight, as strongly as I can, that the tragedies of the past weeks need not have occurred.

Governor Faubus could not have defied law so flagrantly had not President Eisenhower, by his words and his deeds, created a climate favorable to defiance of law.

There was no violence in Little Rock before the tragically misguided Governor threw troops around Central High School -- and there would not have been violence if President Eisenhower had acted immediately to uphold the law of the United States, and the authority of the United States Courts.

(more)

Repeatedly, during the past two years, President Eisenhower has demonstrated that he will not invoke the authority of his office, or the power of the United States Government, against those who would defy the law laid down by the Supreme Court on school desegregation.

His weakness and neglect has been an open invitation to defiance.

The violence of the past weeks is not really unprecedented. In Alabama 18 months ago, mob-violence kept Autherine Lucy from entering the University of Alabama. When President Eisenhower was asked about such violation of federal law and order, what did he say? How did he speak out to head off such a tide of defiance?

Here are his courageous words:

"I would hope that we could avoid any interference..."

If you had been a Negro facing a mob, how would you have felt upon hearing that from your President?

Refuses To Use Authority

Repeatedly, the President has refused to use the authority and prestige of his office in support of the Supreme Court's decision. Twice he refused to endorse the school desegregation decision of the Supreme Court, and he threw cold water on proposals that he call a conference of Southern Governors to discuss racial integration of public schools.

Every public utterance from the President since the Supreme Court decision, including his shilly-shallying back and forth while we in Congress fought for effective civil rights legislation, has contributed to the climate in which Governor Faubus dared to defy United States law, in which the violent and disorderly minority have dared to take the United States laws into their own hands.

Where the mob feels it can defy the law, it will. Every day the government delays, every day the President refuses to assert his authority and leadership, more people dare to join the lawless.

Within Presidential powers were many effective measures. He could have called Governor Faubus' National Guard troops into Federal Service to uphold the law, instead of flouting it.

Or he could have appealed to the hearts of the people -- to those hearts he says cannot be affected by laws.

He could have given courage to the law-abiding and the moderate citizens -- the great majority of the people -- in Arkansas and Little Rock, by going on the television and the radio with a message to them.

He could have thrown his enormous prestige and authority into the battle: in support of our laws, of our courts, of the courageous Mayor of Little Rock, and of the Little Rock School Board with its desegregation program. He could have sent Attorney General Brownell into the courts for an immediate injunction against any interference with the orders of the court. An injunction could have been obtained that day -- instead of three or four or five weeks later. Or he could have flown to Little Rock, and led those children into the school by hand.

There are many things Eisenhower could have done, many things a President who would make decisions could have done. At the very least, he could have remained in Washington, in touch with the tense and dangerous situation as it was developing.

(more)

Blow to U. S. Relations

Elsewhere in the world, people pick up their papers and see photographs of armed troops preventing small children from entering school. They read that the Governor of Arkansas has defied United States law, and that the President has reacted to this by going to Newport, Rhode Island, on vacation.

At a recent news conference, John Foster Dulles deplored the effect of the Arkansas crisis on our prestige in the world.

But did Mr. Dulles mention how different the situation might have been abroad if those people could have read that the President was mobilizing the people and full force of the United States government to enforce compliance with the law, and protection of minorities in our midst?

Did Mr. Dulles mention how different it would appear to the rest of the world if the picture of troops with guns pitted against small children were replaced with a picture of the President devoting full time to protecting those children's rights?

Did Mr. Dulles mention what a difference it would make throughout the world if the picture of Eisenhower on the golf course were replaced by a picture of Eisenhower speaking to the American people about the seriousness, the peril, of what has gone on in Arkansas this month?

The situation we now face is a tragic culmination of weak executive leadership, on this as on other vital issues.

Inaction on civil rights protection at the White House just echoes inaction and indecision in every aspect of the public's interest -- the tragic price we are paying for the Republican formula of trying to substitute popularity for leadership.

During their first term in power, the Republicans were able to give the appearance of political leadership through personal popularity of the President -- and the desire of Republicans to stay in power, whether they agreed or disagreed with the President's policies.

But Republican leadership is already falling apart during their second term in power. Professional Republican politicians know Ike can't run for re-election, and as a result he's unable to command any loyalty from his own party. At the same time, his unwillingness or inability to assert leadership in the public's interest has cost the President support he could have had from our majority party in Congress on many key issues.

Popularity Vs. Leadership

From the start, Republicans have tried to substitute popularity for real leadership. They got by with it for a while, even though they gave us mediocrity instead of principle.

Now they are reaping the harvest.

The executive branch is confused and confounded. It is without direction or guidance. Leaders of the President's own party are more interested in taking care of themselves, than in the President's program or the country.

Despite all the sloganeering about "Peace and Prosperity" last fall, we have lost ground on both fronts. Our prestige and influence has been dangerously undermined by failure of our leadership in international affairs. Our so-called prosperity is unbalanced and tottering as a result of the traditional blindness of Republican economic philosophy at home.

(more)

On the domestic front, the Republican administration has succeeded in putting the nation's finances in a tragic mess. Management and administration of the public debt has resulted in utter and costly confusion.

Farm Debt Soaring

One by one, their chickens are coming home to roost.

Farm incomes have plunged downward, while farm costs soared. More and more farmers are being forced from the land. Farm debt for California totaled \$460 million in 1950. It's climbed another \$400 million since then, for a total of \$867,423,000 today -- an increase of 88.2% in the farm indebtedness of your state -- while that fearless exponent of Hoover's farm philosophy, Ezra Benson, says everything's just fine. Don't you believe it. We went through the wringer once, because we neglected American agriculture while the rest of the economy boomed. We dare not risk it again.

There are two things the Republicans can always be counted on to produce when they are in the saddle: a drop in farm prices, and a rise in interest rates.

The July issue of Economic Indicators, the voice of the President's own Council of Economic Advisors, tells the story as well as I could.

It publishes a table showing farm net income dropped from 15.1 billion in 1952 to 13.3 billion in 1953, 12.7 billion in 1954, 11.9 billion in 1955, and 11.6 billion in 1956.

Alongside is a table showing net interest income has soared from 7.4 billion in 1952 to 8.7 billion in 1953, to 9.8 billion in 1954, to 10.9 billion in 1955, to 11.9 billion in 1956.

Interest income, under Republicans, has surpassed farm income.

Small Business Suffers

But America's small businessman isn't much better off. He's getting it in the neck too -- and this Administration seems unconcerned. It's been a rather enlightening experience for me to act as chairman for a series of Senate Small Business Committee hearings on tax problems around the country -- and hear businessman after businessman -- Republican businessmen, a great many of them -- protest the discriminatory neglect of this supposed businessman's Administration.

They have a right to be concerned. Business bankruptcies are at an all-time high. More and more small independent business proprietors are being forced to the wall.

According to testimony submitted by the administrator of the Federal Courts before the House Appropriations Committee this year, Fiscal 1957 set an all-time record high for the number of business bankruptcies. During fiscal 1957, 73,361 firms went broke, compared with the depression high of 70,049 in fiscal year 1932. The rate of failures is still increasing, and bankruptcies are expected to soar still higher in fiscal 1958 to an estimated new all-time record of 82,000, according to Dun and Bradstreet.

Costs of living for all of us are at an all-time record high, and still going up month by month.

Prices have been rising faster in the last eighteen months than in any other peacetime period on record. Today, our dollar is worth five cents less than it was just last year.

(more)

Republican Inflation

Suddenly, the "Eisenhower prosperity" of last year has become the "Republican inflation" of today, a not-too-surprising by-product of the upside-down, dollars-before-people economic philosophy of the present Republican administration.

It's the same old Republican philosophy of the McKinley-Hoover-Mellon era--the trickle down theory of being concerned only about prosperity at the top of the ladder, with a condescending notion that if all's well among the wealthy, enough will seep down the line to take care of the rest of our people.

They boasted about "Eisenhower prosperity", as long as profits soared at the top of the economic ladder -- in big business, in big finance. But they shut their eyes to the imbalance in that so-called prosperity, and neglected the broad base of our economy -- the farmer, the small businessman, and the average wage earner.

As a result, we're now getting the same results we've always had every time Republican forces have controlled the White House.

Yet all this is under a so-called businesslike, businessman's Administration -- an administration that promised us a "hard" dollar.

The only thing "hard" about the Republican dollars is that they are hard to get -- and harder to keep.

And now that they've created this mess, what are they doing about it?

They are just tightening the squeeze on the victims of inflation. They are tightening credit -- when such action just channels credit to where it is needed the least, and deprives it where it is needed the most. They are asking farmers to be content with loss, when collapsed farm purchasing power is already a depressing drag on the rest of the economy. They are asking all of us, as consumers, to spend less -- at a time when most of us are finding it difficult to even keep abreast of rising costs of living.

Friends, the greatest checkrein to soaring prices is competition--free, competitive enterprise. Yet this administration, after giving such lip service to "free enterprise", continues to pursue tax, fiscal, and credit policies wiping out competition by forcing more and more mergers -- forcing the big to become bigger, by wiping out opportunities for the individual entrepreneur to survive.

Planned Recession

But you haven't seen anything yet. The worst is yet to come.

They followed Andy Mellon's philosophy in getting us into this mess, yet they now seem determined to again blindly follow his philosophy in seeking a way out.

Let me remind you about Andy Mellon's remedy for inflation, when he was secretary of the treasury back in the 1920s. Ex-President Herbert Hoover tells us Mr. Mellon had only one formula: "Liquidate labor, liquidate stocks, liquidate the farmers, liquidate real estate." According to Hoover, Mr. Mellon insisted that "when the people get an inflation brainstorm, the only way to get it out of their blood is to let it collapse".

Now, most Republicans would hesitate to be quite as frank about their intentions today -- but believe me, that's just what is being planned for the American people.

(more)

Behind closed doors, safe from public scrutiny, the people setting policy in the present Administration find themselves closed to the thinking of Secretary Mellon. There is persuasive evidence that the Administration is deliberately guiding our economy into a "planned recession" -- supposedly to stop inflation.

Now, they're not quite ready to tell you about it yet, because they want to wrap it up in a nice package and sell it to you as another great crusade. It is a "crusade" which can mean untold hardship for countless American families -- but dollars come before people, in the Republican philosophy.

Perhaps you didn't know that this Administration had a "planned recession" in store for you next year, unless you are a careful reader of eastern financial publications.

The Journal of Commerce discussed the GOP dilemma in an editorial last July 15, entitled "To Tell or Not to Tell".

That editorial declared the Administration had come to the conclusion that a "moderate recession now" was advisable, to safeguard against boom-and-bust later on. But the question weighing most heavily on the mind of the Journal of Commerce, in the rest of the editorial, was whether the American people should be let in on what their own government plans to do.

From the performance of this government to date, I would dare say that the people will be kept in the dark if it is possible.

Let me warn you tonight that a "planned recession", as a means of combatting inflation, would work its greatest hardship on the west -- where you need the benefits of a growing and expanding economy.

Tight money and tight credit policies of the Eisenhower-Republican Administration may serve the entrenched interests of a static economy but they certainly fail to meet the needs of new development, new growth, and new progress so necessary to keep the dynamic west thriving.

Businessmen need to think about the "readjustment" the Republicans have in store for them. It might be well to recall that back in 1953, that's what Secretary Benson was promising to do for our farmers -- and he certainly has kept his word. If by now you don't know what the Republicans mean by "readjustment", I'd suggest you talk to some of your farmers.

Shouldn't Be Surprise

What we see beginning to happen should not come as any great surprise to those who understand the philosophy of the Republican Party. It has not really changed in its thinking from the days of William McKinley. It has put on a new coat of paint, and has coined a few catchy slogans such as "Modern Republicans", but underneath all the chrome and tinsel there is the same undying belief that dollars come before people.

To date, the Administration has kept its intentions under careful wraps while it makes money even tighter, interest rates even higher, and secretly orders a slash in expenditures. The planned "readjustment" is under way.

No one favors inflation, of course. But in the process of fighting it, let's not kill the patient.

Remember, we had no inflation under Herbert Hoover; the cost of living was down, and the value of the dollar was up.

(more)

But we had millions of people out of work, standing in breadlines without a dime to their names. We had hungry children, we had homes foreclosed, and we had tens of thousands of businessmen forced into bankruptcy.

Our economic health cannot remain strong by reliance on the patent medicine pitch men, whose patron saints are Mark Hanna and Andrew Mellon.

Conclusion

We need, instead, leadership with vision and faith--faith in the American people, faith in an expanding economy.

As Democrats, we can be proud that we have been the party of growth, progress, courage and faith down through the years, in historic struggle after struggle between the entrenched forces of economic privilege and the well-being of all the people.

We are the party of growth and progress today, instead of the party of fear and timidity. We look ahead, instead of backward.

You in the west are bound by spirit to the ideals of the Democratic Party.

The spirit of economic progress, of surging ahead, of always seeking advancement -- that dynamic spirit so prevalent in the west is the prevailing spirit and influence in the Democratic Party today.

We look to the west, and are alert to its needs and its great potential. We look ahead to even new frontiers for our nation, with a determination to grant long-deserved statehood to our fellow Americans in Hawaii and Alaska.

And, too, we're looking to the west for new and greater Democratic victories in 1958, to exert even greater influence on national policies in keeping with the tremendous development under way throughout our western economic frontier.

#



Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



www.mnhs.org