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April 24, 1958

Speaker: Honorable Hubert H. Humphrey  
U.S. Senator from Minnesota

Topic: "Communications: Twentieth Century Ideas in Motion"

Place: Auditorium - Vocational High School  
8:30 - 10:00 P.M.

1958 Convention, Department of Audio-Visual  
Instruction (DAVI), Minneapolis, April 21-25

It is always stimulating to meet with men and women for whom ideas are fresh, vivid, and living things. It is my good fortune to have the opportunity to discuss with such a group as this the problems and the importance of getting good ideas into effective motion.

This is the reason for existence and the motivation after all, of all teachers and it was my privilege to have been a teacher at one time. Getting ideas translated into action is also the goal of us who are in public life. And each of us takes tremendous pride in achieving that goal, in our own way.

For anyone who works with ideas, these have been particularly distressing times. Somehow, our great nation has been giving the impression of a giant in chains, our tremendous strength somehow impotent. Yet seldom has there been more of a ferment of ideas, nor a more restless, seeking spirit among our people. But our ideas seem to sputter, flare up, and fade away before they can be translated into affirmative action. As a nation, we just don't seem to be able to get off the ground.

Remember a few short weeks ago -- that graphic symbol of frustration and enchained intelligence -- the Vanguard rocket. There it sat, a magnificent idea made concrete, choking on its launching pad with some minor fuel malfunction or other, while overhead whirled two Soviet sputniks -- very much in motion -- unchallenged by the most sophisticated scientific community on the face of the earth.

This international humiliation was ended, as we all know, when another idea or complex of ideas known as the Explorer satellite system, vaulted into space.

A rocket on a launching pad has a lot of potential. An idea on the launching pad of an intellectual's mind has a lot of potential. But it is the push, the thrust, that we can get behind the rocket, and the idea, that is so very critically important.

Putting ideas -- good ideas -- into motion takes a great deal of energy, decision, and skill.

We are now short on ideas in this country. Far from it. Every time I turn around these days it seems someone hands me a good idea. This is one of the blessings of this democracy, that everyone feels free to think up new ideas, and we have a bubbling of opinion and thought that is very healthy and useful.

But to translate the best of these ideas into motion and action, there must be a matching decision and a full use of the wealth of techniques of communication.

Believe me, the Soviet Union under the leadership of the extremely shrewd and capable Krushchev understands the power of the idea in motion.

Perhaps no one has better stated the contrast between the vigorous use of ideas (including false ideas) by the Soviet leaders, and our own unaccountable failure to rise to the occasion recently than the cartoonist Herb Block of the Washington Post . . . (HERB BLOCK CARTOON)

I think you would agree, incidentally, that this cartoon is a superb demonstration of the picture that speaks a thousand words. It needs no explanation. It is humorous, bitterly humorous. In a few lines Block has expressed the frustration and exasperation of millions of thoughtful Americans. (BLOCK CARTOON OFF)

I can assure you that I understand how the President or Mr. Dulles must feel when they open their morning paper and get a bang in the eye like the one Herb Block delivers every few days or so! (SCOTT LONG CARTOON OF HUMPHREY)

My office wall is festooned with cartoons like this one by another fine artist, Scott Long of the Minneapolis Tribune. Mr. Long can make quite a point with a few brush strokes, too! You might say that he can trim a subject better than the Senator Humphrey in his cartoon!

I cannot let this opportunity go by to mention that Scott Long received well-deserved recognition recently, for this superb demonstration of visual shorthand. . . (SCOTT LONG CARTOON OF "BLACK EYE")

This is the newspaper clipping about Scott's award by the journalism fraternity Sigma Delta Chi for the outstanding cartoon of the year. The cartoon originally appeared in the Minneapolis Tribune the day after Little Rock, and was widely reprinted around the country.

There is an example of how to crystallize, or distill an idea, get a solid push behind it, and create a major impact on public opinion. (LITTLE ROCK CARTOON OFF)

One of the major underlying causes of the tragedy of Little Rock was, I fear, that the ugly situation developing was not met with sufficient determination at an early enough time. Timing, in political affairs, as well as in audio-visual productions is extremely critical. Timely decisions, and the determination to put them into effect, are among the first responsibilities of leadership in a democracy like our own.

Many felt long before Little Rock that there were ways and means of meeting and preventing the saddening spectacle that developed. Many feel today, that with timely decisions and determination to press forward, there are ways to cope, and cope effectively, with the powerful drive of the Soviet Union, with this very serious recession, with the onrushing problems of our expanding population.

We are looking, then, for that "thrust" that gets us off the ground. All the rich and adverse talents and resources of this democracy await the vital forward impulse that can be released only by the topmost political leadership of the nation, and particularly by the man who holds the vast powers of the American presidency.

Someone must turn on the switch to set the American dynamo humming! Krushchev challenges us to compete. Our first decision must be to accept the challenge in the realm of ideas, as we accepted the military challenge of the Soviet Union first made over ten years ago.

You can't run a foot-race, you know, if you are forever bending down to tie your shoelaces!

To paraphrase Lord Palmerston, the great British foreign minister of the early nineteenth century, ideas are stronger than armies. If they are founded on truth and justice, they will in the end prevail, as said "against the bayonet of infantry, the fire of artillery and the charge of cavalry."

The Russians have adopted Palmerston's point of view with a vengeance, except that they have conveniently neglected that fine print about "truth and justice." We, I fear, are still hypnotized by "hardware". Vitally important as it is to maintain parity in weapons with the Soviet Union, what great folly it will be if we do not recognize that military force is but one area of competition!

Now let us assume, (and let us devoutly hope) that someone will at least turn on the switch. Let us assume that we are determined to do something.

Now comes the second great task of political leadership: putting the massive power of the United States behind the right ideas.

A democratic leader has sometimes been compared with an orchestra leader, to get some idea of the diversity which he must weld into unity. Surrounded as I am with men and women steeped in the audio-visual production tradition. I am tempted to compare the democratic leader with a producer. In a sense, the leader in a democracy is like the producer of a motion picture, a television program, a radio broadcast, a sound-slide series. He is trying to persuade people to do something. And to help him in his task, he is truly

fortunate in our country to be able to call upon the skills of many people, many specialists, many talents. Like the producer, his job is too big to do by himself. He must, however, select the basic idea, furnish the motive power, and then prepare to follow through, to supervise, encourage and stimulate his team of specialists.

The producer must find the right idea -- the right story, or concept. He knows that the finest of technicians and the most superb talent will give him nothing more than a mediocre production, unless he has an important idea to work from.

Similarly, the democratic leader must spend much time and energy in selection of his program. That is basic. From all the deluge of advice and entreaty, he must select the most promising, judge it against his own intelligence and experience and training, and make that primary decision: This is the program behind which I will throw all my resources and energy!

Just as in a film, a telecast or radio broadcast -- just as in a lecture in a schoolroom -- it is absolutely vital that what is chosen to be said be important. So much, so very much, of what goes on film, over television and radio, in the newspapers, is simply frivolous, petty, and unimportant. There is a tragic waste of fine talent and creative energy in the field of communications in America.

Most of the bad pictures, the bad television shows, and the public policies of the nation which fail, have had lavish productions -- crews of writers, squadrons of technical personnel, shoals of money. They are bad, most of them, because the basic idea chosen was a bad one -- mistaken, shallow, unimportant.

How difficult it is to pick that right idea, amidst the bombardment from all sides. But how important! For the producer, it is the opportunity for a smash production, fame, possibly fortune.

For the democratic leader it can be the opportunity for greatness.

George Allen . . . . (PICTURE OF ALLEN), the new Director of the United States Information Agency, recently said something like this: All the radio transmitters, motion picture productions, and television shows in the world cannot substitute for or replace intelligent basic policy. (PICTURE OFF)

In other words, you can't get by very long on words and pictures alone. You can't make a bad policy good without changing the policy itself.

But again -- let's assume that we decide not only that we are going to get an action program under way, but we have even selected a good, sound program. Now comes the "how" part -- technique, the choice of the medium of communication.

The democratic leader must think about his audience, his "target." He is now full-tilt in the field of communication. What is the best way to get

his program going? Is his target the chairman of a Senate Committee?  
Is it the Washington Press Corp?

His audience may be the people of the country directly, as was so often the case with President Franklin Roosevelt, in his radio fireside chats. It may be the people of southeast Asia. It might be American farm families, or small businessmen, or big businessmen; it might be the impoverished young intellectual of India.

In the field of public policy, it is my opinion that audio-visual techniques do not yet play the role they someday will. In his choice of media, the democratic leader still relies for the most part on the news release, the speech, the press conference.

I might point out that I am trying something entirely new for me tonight, in using audio-visual materials in an address of this kind, and I am grateful for the kind assistance so freely offered to this rank amateur in the audio-visual field.

While we in government are still slow in taking advantage of all the possibilities of the audio-visual field, some of the new habit patterns of Americans are being recognized -- particularly the incredible amount of time devoted to watching television. The live news interview on television has become a fixed institution for the "trial balloon" on policy. Even the wire services are now beginning to watch these shows for their morning stories.

TV is having a yet unmeasured impact. We are all familiar with the exciting experimental work being done in the nation's now thirty-one educational television stations, often in conjunction with the audio-visual departments of school systems, colleges and universities. Not only are these cooperative undertakings performing a magnificent job of putting ideas in motion, but they are fruitful training grounds for the young men and women whose future tasks will include the interpretation of American life and policy abroad.

Television, film and audio-visual materials ingenious are becoming vitally important in the communication of ideas in all of the advanced nations of the world, while radio for years has been the possession of the most peasant economy. The United States has not, however, begun to exploit audio-visual technique as instruments of foreign policy anywhere near the extent that is possible. As television set ownership rises, as motion picture and slide projectors spread into the have-not areas of the world, a growing opportunity is given us to get our ideas across.

Some steps have been taken in this direction. When Marion Anderson completed her triumphant tour of Asia, the film produced by Ed Murrow for CBS See It Now was reproduced in more than 100 copies for distribution overseas. But in general, the fact continues to be overlooked that with the simple, honest portrayal of American life that can be found in the best of our documentary films -- many of the ideas of America can break through the hundred language and distance barriers that effectively block the real America from the world's view.

How much can be said about the mind and the heart of America in the kind of artistry represented by such works as "The Strange One", with its portrayal of the patient work of a social worker in a home for delinquent boys, or the beautiful conception of the impact of technological America on the boy from the bayou country.

It is true that we have built up rather a substantial number of film libraries overseas -- one in each of more than 200 information centers in 78 countries. And the USIA motion picture or information officer attached, presses a rather varied usage of our films. Audiences will range from those in regular commercial theaters all the way to groups who have trudged in from a radius of ten miles in the jungle or desert. Some 7,000 projectors of its own are used by the Agency in the less developed areas, as well as over 300 mobile motion picture vans equipped with their own electric generators.

The schools in many countries are using our motion pictures, and apparently in some places have even made them an integral part of the school curriculum. Government agencies, especially in agriculture and health, frequently borrow the USIA films. Civic clubs, religious groups, labor and professional groups, youth organizations --- the kinds of groups that use films in our own country --- are given access to the USIA films. Practically all of the more than 1,000 titles are also available for use on any TV stations overseas.

Many times, in the best audio-visual tradition, the USIA people make an effort to combine, or as they say "interlock" media -- to broaden or to sharpen the impact. A USIA exhibit can be, and often is, later given a form of permanence with the use of the motion picture camera -- just as Marion Anderson's visit to Southeast Asia was recorded for later film showings.

About forty percent of the films in the overseas program are acquired through a regular and systematic screening of the output of educational, documentary, cultural and industrial films. For other films USIA contracts with private companies for documentary and newsreel type films. Still another group is produced by USIA overseas in 44 countries, in an effort to clothe the "message" in the local language and settings.

Some intensely interesting work has been done in the less developed areas, where films were tailored specifically for local needs and problems. Incidentally, the first overseas production done for USIA was performed by a group of American university film production units, under USIA contract.

The USIA use of audio-visual materials, along with their use by the International Cooperation Administration, has clearly stimulated a desire in the less developed countries to make use of such materials in their own self-improvement programs. My friends in USIA assure me that many people from the audio-visual ranks which you represent have served with great distinction abroad in the many governmental programs of planning and producing audio-visual materials for rapid mass-learning.

Are we doing enough? One way to measure this is to look at what the Soviet is doing in the field.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union contains a propaganda and agitation section (Agitprop) which receives its orders directly from the Presidium of the Central Committee, the highest body in the Soviet world. The closely interwoven structure of the Communist Party and the Soviet Government insures that for propaganda purposes there is no distinction between the two.

The cost of current Soviet bloc propaganda activity is incalculable, but a few indices are available. For example, it is estimated that each year the Soviet program spends considerably more on jamming the Voice of America alone than the United States does on its total overseas information program. Incidentally, it has also been estimated that the Sixth World Youth Festival last year in Moscow -- the purpose of which was almost exclusively propagandistic -- cost more than \$150 million. Again more than the entire U. S. information effort.

It is known that in 1957 an average of 2,254 program hours per week went out over the Communist international broadcasting network. (This can be compared with 750 hours a week on the Voice of America.) The Soviets published approximately 25 million books in free world languages during the first three quarters of 1957 and also published more than 110 foreign language periodicals circulating in free world areas. The cost of activities such as these and of other activities of the thousands of "local chapters" of the Communist Party and front groups must be staggering. No, I do not think we are doing enough in the use of audio-visual materials in our overseas information program. Congress has a serious responsibility to make more funds available for this purpose. And the Administration can surely show more imagination and initiative in encouraging the fuller participation of the thousands of talented figures and craftsmen throughout America who could contribute so much to a broadly expanded program.

Not only could we have a "Voice of America." We could, with sufficient planning, produce an enormous effective visual program. We could say: Here is America! Here we are, with our faults as well as our virtues. Here is the real America of striking vigor, flashing imagination, bursting creativity. Here, we could say, is an America struggling to find the answers, an America earnestly seeking to do what is right, an America not at all reflected in the gangster movies, the technicolor musicals, and all the westerns that have ever galloped across the screens of Europe and Asia and Africa!

Let me emphasize once again, that without something to say, that is without a policy to implement, doubling and even tripling the USIA budget would largely be a waste of time. Furthermore, it is safe to say that dollars alone will not provide an effective program of audio-visual production for our information program overseas.

The scientists are uniformly fond of assuring me that dollars alone will not produce creative thought and important discoveries. They stress, again and again, that the truly creative person is a relative rarity, and that very careful program must be designed which are entirely without reference to the massive expenditures of funds.

A million dollars could be plunged into the production of one motion picture, and frequently is, in the entertainment industry. That same million could be dedicated to a program of encouragement and incentive to the struggling audio-visual producers around the country, and might produce startling results.

There are gifted individuals, in college and out, throughout the country -- experimenting on shoestrings, struggling to advance the art of visual communication, working on budgets of five hundred dollars or perhaps five thousand -- producing stimulating, honest, sometimes beautiful, films and filmstrips for perhaps one or two percent of the cost of a Hollywood entertainment film. What could they not do, with just a few thousand dollars to work with!

Financial worries that affect the typical education TV station, for example, cannot help but diminish the creativity and effectiveness of their work. I see no reason why governmental units at the local, state and national level should not participate in the financing of these operations, in the public interest.

Senator Warren Magnuson, I believe, was to begin hearings on a bill to provide financial assistance to states which have been unable to move as yet into the field of educational television.

Other proposals are already being given serious attention. In Title Ten of S. 3187, which I am proud to co-sponsor with Senator Lister Hill, we have proposed a program which I believe would go a long way toward advancing the art and technique -- and the habits of use -- of audio-visual materials for serious (as opposed to more entertainment) purposes.

Essentially, under Title X we would provide \$5 million for the first year, and \$10 million for each of the next four years to promote research and experimentation in the audio-visual field.

There would be grants-in-aid to public and nonprofit agencies and individuals, to be approved by a National Advisory Council on New Educational Media. Congress would be authorized for projects of research and experimentation in audio-visual instruction. A central exchange and library of audio-visual materials would be maintained, including materials produced abroad.

Program units would be organized and made available to State and local educational agencies.

All of these activities would be coordinated under an Institute for Research and Experimentation in New Educational Media within the U. S. Office of Education.

Such a broad program of encouragement would strongly supplement the pioneering work which has already been done by the Ford Foundation and other nonprofit foundations and organizations, which has been so important in the steady progress of the past decade in audio-visual production and use.

Senator Lister Hill has held extensive hearings on this bill, and I am very hopeful indeed that his Committee on Labor and Public Welfare will favorably report the bill to the Senate floor sometime in May. On the House Side, similar progress is being made by Congressman Elliot on a matching bill.

With such a two-pronged effort -- that is, encouraging creative experimentation on the one hand, and providing in effect a "market" for audio-visual productions through such agencies as USIA -- the whole field of audio-visual work can be enormously stimulated.

This would be good for our nation. It would make us more articulate in our dealings with the rest of the world. It would also intensify the broad educational effort we are now making, by multiplying the number of students which can be reached by superior teachers. This, in turn, would give impetus to our effort to regain the initiative in our struggle with the Soviet system -- a struggle which demands, and will continue to demand the most intensive planning, coordination and perseverance.

Only through the vigorous and imaginative use of all the media of communication can an Administration expect to convince the country that it must make the sacrifices necessary to meet the multiple Soviet challenges and to avoid the catastrophe of either war or Soviet domination. And only through an equally vigorous use of communications media -- founded soundly on intelligent policy, of course -- can our leaders expect to rebuild the confidence and unity of the West and shatter the glib confidence of the Soviet leadership.

But even should we succeed in ending the arms race, in reducing crushing burden of armaments and the overhanging threat of catastrophe from nuclear weapons, we must still be prepared to face a generation of struggle to win the minds and hearts of the newly-conscious peoples of Asia and Africa. Let us hope that we will have the determination to enter the contest seriously, the intelligence to formulate wise policies, and the trained men and women to put them into effective action.

Of all the powerful ideas at work in the world, none has more strength than the world's yearning for peace -- and not simply the absence of war, but peace with progress.

We must identify ourselves vigorously, simply and directly, with this great idea, in terms of positive progress of better housing, more jobs, more food, and for dignity and freedom for the men and women who have nothing for so long.

Ideas, you see, are in motion -- powerful ideas that are sweeping away old political institutions, breaking through the encrusted traditions of five centuries. Nationalism, and force nationalism at that, is an idea and a movement among the Asian and African peoples that must be recognized and taken into the most serious consideration by American policy planners. The idea of equal opportunity and non-discrimination on the grounds of religion or color is another powerful idea that is upsetting the old order. The peoples of colored skin in this world are in the majority, and it has long since become evident that they will no longer tolerate the inferior status we of the West have assigned them for these five centuries of Caucasian domination.

The magnificent conception of international organization for peaceful purposes is still another tenacious and vigorous idea important in our world -- and very much in motion. Steadily, in the face of the huge buildup of weapons of mass destruction, men and women of vision and purpose are working to strengthen the economic, social and cultural organizations that are some of the brightest hopes in an often bleak international picture. The idea that all peoples should be free of the age-old scourge of disease is being magnificently carried forward -- in malaria control programs, in the attack of trachoma, tuberculosis and scores of other plagues.

Still another idea powerfully at work in the world, but one which our government regretfully has not yet adopted, is that food and fiber are great national treasures, and can be vital instruments of foreign policy. Mr. Krushchev is the first of the Soviet leaders to recognize this fact, and in the face of our own leadership's indifference to the opportunity to

use food intelligently and wisely, the Soviet leaders are surging forward in an effort to overtake us in food and fiber production. American food and fiber abundance is not something we should be ashamed of, but an asset of of incalculable value.

Finally, the idea of providing the kind of education that will permit individuals to realize their full intellectual potential, the idea of ensuring that gifted young people will not be denied higher education opportunities simply because of a lack of family finances, is gathering real momentum. In our history we have steadily widened the opportunity for education for everyone. But it is only recently that we have come to realize the great gaps in our educational structure. It is nothing short of tragic -- for the individuals and for our nation -- that we have not devised a system that would provide the 150,000 or so young high school graduates with very superior ability who do not now go on to college each year for lack of funds, the opportunity to develop their potential through higher education.

I think we are going to take steps to meet this challenge. As long ago as January of 1957 I proposed legislation to provide direct scholarships and loans for 40,000 such young people. This year, I was privileged to join with Senator Lister Hill in introducing the National Defense Education bill about whose Title X we have had some discussion earlier. We have even succeeded in encouraging the Administration to make a similar, though far smaller, request of Congress. Clearly we are going to have concrete, positive legislation in this field this year, and the impact on the intellectual level of our nation may be astonishing over the coming decades.

Finally, it is important to point out that were there no Soviet Union, were there no Nikita Krushchev, were there no overhanging threat of nuclear warfare, we would still live in a world of incredible problems and dangers -- and opportunities. Surely it is short-sighted to be forever reacting instead of acting, to be forever holding back instead of forging boldly ahead with our own ideas. This is a world in constant flux, ever changing, constant only in its inevitable change.

The task of encouraging and training the young people of our nation to assume political, economic and technical leadership is of nobility and intense importance. You teachers, and you specialists in the visualization of the idea, deserve the warmest support and encouragement of the nation. I can only assure you that there are many in the Congress of the United States who share my conviction that the profession of teaching must somehow receive the social and financial rewards that have for so long been denied to educators.

This is just another idea that I hope to get into motion.

Meanwhile, while our society, not yet in its full maturity, does not yet recognize in more concrete terms the critical importance of the teaching profession to the strength and economic health of our nation, let me assure you that never has the prestige of the teacher been higher. Never, it seems to me, have the prospects been brighter for the participation by educators in major policy decisions of our government. This is a long and important stride forward, I believe, and bodes well for the future welfare of our own, and of the world's people.



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