

Remarks of

Senator Hubert H. Humphrey

Democratic Party Brunch  
Casper, Wyoming  
April 26, 1959

*Casper  
Sunday*

*About our  
Party  
History!!*

Sunday is a day for sober thought about the things that are lost sight of in the clatter of the working week -- a busy week for all of you as it has been for me travelling throughout this great West of ours.

It is in this respectful spirit of sober thought that I am here to talk about politics -- the same kind of politics that sounded this morning from pulpits in Casper, Wyoming, and from thousands of others across the land.

Here this morning, and everywhere else, congregations of Americans were called upon to rededicate themselves to two tasks.

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The first task was to know the difference between justice and injustice, between freedom and oppression, between order and disorder.

The second and related task, was to act in the right as God gives us the power to know <sup>and see</sup> ~~where~~ the right ~~resides~~, <sup>resides</sup>.

I feel deeply this <sup>challenge</sup> ~~summons from the pulpit~~ to unite the mind and the will in social effort, <sup>for the common good.</sup>

↳ To play a part in the <sup>practical</sup> ~~art~~ of government, to play a part in the mainstream of our political life, is to respond to that great <sup>challenge</sup> ~~summons~~.

↳ Politics is a creative social act that must be engaged in by anyone who takes seriously the call to thought and action ~~he hears from the pulpit~~.

↳ Through the art of politics, we define, advance, test and decide whether this or that proposal can best serve the common interest.

Through the art of politics, public opinion makes its presence felt as a controlling, disciplining and guiding force in the operations of government.

In this complex world of politics, as well as life itself, not all is sharply black or white, good or evil. People of differing views can have equal depth of conviction.

Neither political party in America is perfect; neither political party is all bad.

But having said that much, I proclaim my pride in being a Democrat.

We are the only national party there is in America -- the only party with a representation in the national government rising from the South as well as the North, from the West as well as the East.

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Sure, if we were only a regional party like  
 the Republicans, we could talk to each other in whispers.  
 But a national party has special communications problems.  
 It must talk across great spaces, amid the roar of great  
rivers of humanity, and must overcome great barriers to  
sight and sound.

When a Democrat in Alabama speaks his heart and  
 mind to a Democrat in Wyoming, he has to raise his  
 voice in order to be heard. For a Democrat here in  
 Wyoming to be heard by one in New York, he too, has to  
raise his voice.

*in other words spell out the issue and the program*

There may at times appear to be differences  
 within our <sup>Democratic</sup> family, as there are on occasion in any  
family -- but it would be a fatal mistake for our  
 political opponents to ever think for a moment that  
we do not stand shoulder to shoulder together as

*Family Differences*

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Democrats for common goals of progress and development.

↳ We have room for and want people of conviction who will speak up for those convictions within our party's framework. We are not a party of "thought control" or rigid intellectual discipline. We want to be a <sup>"</sup>blend of the best that is in all of us -- and all of us have something to contribute.

↳ Incidentally, our new blend seems to have more of a Western <sup>flavor</sup> ~~accent~~ than ever before.

The fact that we Democrats argue among ourselves on occasion <sup>indicates</sup> ~~says~~ something good and fine about the size and health of our family.

↳ It says that we are the only party with interests that are as varied as the nation itself. We are the only party that embraces the laborer and the businessman, the farmer and the miner, the rancher and the office-worker,

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the field hand and the white collar professional,  
the young and the old, the consumer and the producer --  
and a lot more besides.

*Pop & Spec. Interests*

↳ If we were like the Republicans, resting on  
but a few strong <sup>spirit</sup> interests, the strongest of the few  
could have its way among us without argument. These  
few could act like the admissions committee for the  
Union League Club, blackballing any applicant who  
threatened to breathe the spirit of life into their  
overstuffed mausoleum.

↳ In an otherwise uncertain world, there is at  
least one certainty. It is that any single interest  
in the Democratic party which tried to make every  
other interest act like all were a pack of identical  
twins, soon would find itself standing all alone in  
not so splendid isolation. A party in which so many

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strong national interests are included, will not tolerate  
dictation by any one or any combination of them. Instead,  
we are going to keep up a running debate about how best  
to adjust and resolve conflicts between equally  
legitimate claims for support by the party as a whole.

This, indeed, is the great single service the Democratic Party has performed for the nation. We have a two-sided proof of how important this work is.

One side of the proof came in 1860. As of that year, the Democratic party was the only political force which still held the Union together. But when the Democrats from the North and the South, along with their respective interests, pulled apart until each stood alone, the government itself was torn apart and we had our Civil War.

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The other side of the proof came in the years that followed the Civil War. The regular organs of the government were then incapable of doing the work of national reunion. But at this juncture, the Democratic party served the purposes of the government when Northern Democrats and the pre-Civil War Southern Democrats reknit the broken ends of their national party -- to talk and to argue with each other once more, and so to reestablish a sense of community.

*Some say -  
we Demos to  
Idealistic - too  
spiritual too  
restless*

Yes, we Democrats are restless as well as argumentative. Yes, we are never content to let well enough alone, but are always restless to get on with the business of exploring new horizons.

We are restless because we know that America cannot stand still and continue to live. It can live only if it grows. We are restless because we do not want

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to crop our size to the monuments of the national past.

We want to honor the monuments of the past by building

beyond them to an ever-expanding future.

↳ We are restless because we do not want to be  
embalmed in the case of a <sup>pol + economic</sup> mummy. In Pharaoh's Egypt

the whole of the national energy went into the worship

of death but America ~~is not such a nation.~~ We affirm <sup>we</sup> + proclaim

the goodness of life, and we want to spend our national

energy in liberating and purifying life from the

corrosive presence of fear, disease, want, ignorance

and intolerance.

↳ We are restless, because we are eager to redefine

America as being something more than just a giant plot

to make money. We affirm that our economic system can

provide a <sup>decent</sup> living wage, a proper education, and a decent

home for every American.

*and at the same time  
set an example for the whole  
world -*

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↳ We are eager to redefine our national purpose  
in terms of something more than an <sup>abq</sup> IBM machine punching  
holes in a soulless stack of cards. We affirm the  
vitality of our constitutional principle of equality  
and the right of every man, woman and child to human  
dignity without regard to race, religion, or ancestry.

↳ We are restless because we reject the view that  
good government is fulfilled merely by good administration,  
or good bookkeeping. If that was all there was to good  
government, then nobody should be allowed to stand for  
public office except certified public accountants.

↳ But to us, as Democrats, with our roots deep in  
the people, good administration is not a substitute for  
good policies.

↳ We are restless for the same reason that Democrats  
were restless in the years immediately preceding the

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election of Woodrow Wilson in 1912, and the election  
of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932. Both times, the  
Republicans had held the control of the Executive for  
a long stretch. Both times in that long stretch, we  
had a government dedicated to the postponement and  
evasion of solutions to urgent domestic and international  
problems. Both times, the weight of executive energy  
was bent to the end that things should stand still.

Care taken

↳ But Democrats knew that an America which tries  
to stand still, is an America that pronounces a sentence  
of doom on itself. That is why in 1912 and in 1932, the  
election of Democratic Presidents ushered in great  
creative periods in our national life. Under Wilson and  
again under Roosevelt, we at once leaped forward in a  
new birth of freedom. Unlike what happened after the  
change of Administrations in 1953, we didn't have to

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spend one, two, three, four, five, six, and now seven  
 years just studying problems. From the very day Wilson  
and Roosevelt took their Inaugural oath, they were ready  
 with action programs based on hard study of problems  
before and not ~~just~~ after they asked the people for the  
 trust of the Presidential office.

Today, once more, and for the same reason, we  
 are restless to get on with the programs we have already  
formulated to serve America. We want this nation of ours  
 to breathe <sup>deep</sup> again. We are eager to be once more a people  
on the move -- a people who voluntarily assume the yoke --  
and the glory that goes with it -- of advancing mankind's  
best hopes for justice and peace.

We were in times past, and in a very literal sense,  
the giver and the protector of light in a sorely troubled  
world. There is no reason why that should not be the case

(Power)  
 We Want to  
 Develop our  
 Resources,  
 Schools  
 help the  
 aged  
 encourage  
 Industry.  
 Aid depressed  
 areas  
 improve  
 transport.

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right now. America still has tremendous, unsurpassed  
resources in material, strength, in energy, and in  
creative talents.

*all that is needed is leadership -*

*Purpose -  
Inspiration*

Why then have we come to live with a bad taste  
in our mouth -- with a sense that despite our material  
comforts, we have no inner joy? Why then do we live  
with fear in our eyes -- with the sense that tomorrow  
may be the day of ~~the apocalypse?~~ <sup>war & tragedy</sup> Why then do we live  
with shame in our hearts -- with the sense that  
because of some self-inflicted wound, we have fallen  
from the heights we once occupied?

*bad*

This bad taste, this fear, this shame, all have  
a common cause. The cause, dating from 1953, is the  
infectious disease of ~~significance~~ <sup>apathy</sup> and indifference  
<sup>caught</sup> ~~caught~~ from a breakdown in leadership at the very  
summit of the nation.

*out*

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There may have been a time when the Presidency could serve as a place of dignified retirement ~~in one's~~ ~~old age.~~

There may have been a time when it could be awarded to a man as a sort of good conduct medal for performance in a lesser station.

~~There may have been a time when it was enough for a President to do nothing in particular but to do it very well -- like some ceremonial figure in an empty pageant of states.~~

There may have been a time when a President could put himself so far above politics as to become politically invisible or unapproachable.

There may have been a time when the Presidency could resolve itself into a long and tedious exercise in attitudes, platitudes and beatitudes -- to the

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exclusion of concrete action.

But if ever there was such a time, that time is  
not now.

*must be a*

*h2* Now, the Presidency ~~is the~~ vital place of action --

the only staff and command post that can unite and give *the nation*

direction and purpose to three worlds. One is the *Pr*

divided world of our *our* ~~government proper.~~ *operation* The second is

the larger world of the whole nation which encompasses

the world of our governmental machinery. And the third

is the still larger world beyond our shores -- a world

whose very survival may depend upon leadership from our

own White House.

*(Democ Congress - what can it do)*

*h* The Congress cannot do the President's work for  
him. Under modern conditions, the Congress can lay down

general policy lines. It can revise policies it receives

in draft form from the Executive. It can veto those policies.

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Or it can oversee the way they are executed by the President.

↳ But Congress cannot fill the Presidential vacuum.

If the President defaults on his role as a national and world leader, there is no force to fill that vacuum.

The Congress was not designed to be and cannot be the commander in chief of the armed forces, the chief initiator of foreign affairs, the head of government, the leader and interpreter of national and international public opinion.

↳ The Congress is built along Constitutional lines to give voice to local and regional <sup>national</sup> interests. It does not have the unified energy, ~~the staying power~~, and the operational powers to give momentum to the whole of the national effort, and to that of the free world besides.

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By the force of <sup>our</sup> ~~the~~ Constitution, and by inescapable historical necessity, those powers are vested in, and are meant to be exercised by the President in person -- though he is responsible to the Courts in his legal character, and to the Congress and the people in his political character. If he fails to exercise those powers, every aspect of our political life falls into disarray.

That is exactly what has happened to us <sup>under this Republican</sup> ~~of late.~~ <sub>Administration.</sub>

What has happened is the reverse side of the truth once voiced by Lord Acton that all power tends to corrupt and absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely. The reverse side is, that the absence of power or its non-exercise under urgent circumstances, can corrupt just as thoroughly.

The ~~total~~ default of Presidential leadership is the greatest corrupting influence in our Nation today.

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*Review Clark's prediction  
be stopped at 5 hours*

What we have had of late, is a care-taker  
government, a mark-time government, a do-as-you-can  
sort of government, an artificial sun-lamp government --  
 a government spouting <sup>*cliques*</sup> ~~and clichés~~ from Poor Richard's  
Almanac, while the Communists are everywhere on the  
march with their perverse zeal to remake the world in  
their own image. What we have had is a government  
whose first and last line of defense always is, that  
it means well.

*Means well*

Well, simply to "mean well" never was and is not  
now good enough in the affairs of great nations. The  
graveyard of history is crowded with the bones of  
peoples who had good intentions but lacked the imagination,  
the exact knowledge, and the driving energy that could  
translate those good intentions into specific realities  
in a formidable world.

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^ Nor is it good enough these days for a great  
nation merely to wait for events to happen, and then  
to react to them. A great nation must march at the  
head of events, and by measures born of foresight,  
produce the events it wants.

^ The Democratic party has absorbed this lesson  
of history. That is why it is the oldest political  
party, with the longest unbroken history of any political  
party in the world today. For the same reason, that is  
why it is an eternally young party, supercharged with  
eagerness to release the giant powers of America for  
greatness in building here at home and abroad. And again  
for the same reason, that is why our party at critical  
moments in American history has raised from its midst the  
Presidential leadership that has sounded the call to action-  
stations the nation was waiting to hear. It is waiting

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to hear that call right now. And our party is ready.

April 16, 1959

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This bad taste, this fear, this shame, all have a common cause. The cause, dating from 1953, is the infectious disease of slothfulness and indifference caught from a breakdown in leadership at the very summit of the nation.

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to hear that call right now. And our party is ready.

April 16, 1959



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