

FROM:

SENATOR JOHN F. KENNEDY'S
NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS AND AMERICAN FREEDOM
Park Sheraton Hotel
7th Avenue at 56th Street
New York, N.Y.

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SENATOR HUMPHREY'S REPORT TO SENATOR KENNEDY AT
NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS AND AMERICAN FREEDOM

Senator Kennedy, you asked us to meet here, even in the midst of the campaign, to turn some of the heat about civil rights into light--to chart a course of action in carrying out the Democratic platform adopted in Los Angeles.

Some 400 people from all over the country came here at your invitation. They came at their own expense because they wanted to contribute to the program of action to which the Democratic Party is committed. They took time out from their family lives and local campaigning because you thought it was important--and because they thought it was important--to do some clear thinking and joint planning on the specific steps necessary to carry out our platform.

Senator Kennedy, let me be frank: things are going well out our way, but it is a tough race, and I have not left my home base for many forays outside Minnesota. But I thought that this precedent you are setting in calling such a meeting was so constructive that I could not fail to come. And I am happy I did, for you have assembled here some of the finest people I have ever met--people from 42 states--people who are experts in the field of constitutional rights, people who have been fighting for those rights, year in and year out.

I hope the Republicans will be inspired or challenged to try to convene such a meeting on the implementation of their civil rights platform, even such as it is. I don't think they could assemble anything like the group we have here. Because although a minority of Democrats disagree with our platform, the majority want action; and the opposite seems to be the case in the other party: a majority seemed to oppose the Rockefeller platform forced upon them, or at least the majority were indifferent to civil rights. We Democrats, whatever our faults, are not indifferent.

Because we care--and care passionately--about the rights of all Americans, we have worked hard these last two days. We have taken testimony from 63 experts and witnesses with first-hand evidence on the problems at hand right up to the moment you arrived. So there is no time for a final report to you. We are going to prepare such reports. Each panel is going to get to work on them immediately. We will submit them to you, along with the full transcript of this conference, as soon as they are ready. But let me now sum up some of the main points that have emerged from the testimony and discussion.

On the legislation panel, headed by Senator Clark and Congressman Celler, you know the points covered; the proposals in the platform-- for an improvement of Congressional procedures so that majority rule prevails and decisions can be made after reasonable debate without being blocked by a minority in either house, for a national HEPC, for an end to literacy tests and poll taxes, for desegregation underway in every school district by 1963. We also heard testimony on home rule for the District of Columbia and for action to require reapportionment of Congressional and state legislative districts according to equal population standards. It was the consensus of the panel that comprehensive civil rights legislation should be high on the agenda for action during the first 100 days of a new Democratic Administration. I know that when you and your advisors study the full transcript of this conference, you will find many practical suggestions for moving ahead on all these points.

There was a panel on Executive Action in the fields of education, voting and the administration of justice, headed by Governor Mennen Williams and Frank Reeves. Lt. Governor Philleo Nash of Wisconsin and Franklin Williams, Assistant Attorney General of California were deputy chairmen. They heard dramatic testimony from the former principal of Clinton High School in Tennessee who told how little support a community under fire in the process of desegregation received from the federal government. They heard from other witnesses from the South how this cold shoulder by the Executive branch--how this Republican inaction and indifference, this refusal to state the moral case or set the moral tone--crippled the forces of reason and goodwill. The plea of every witness was for a President who would speak on these ^{of the} issues and act on them ahead of time before the crisis overtakes us--before violence erupts and the only question is

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maintaining order. It is justice which must be established and this takes leadership by a President who is not above the battle. It was proposed that there be a White House Conference--or conferences--on this issue, as part of a program of executive initiative--as one way to carry out the platform pledge of "inventive, imaginative, persuasive leadership by the President of the United States."

On voting, the lessons of recent years are also clear: a do-little Department of Justice has brought only six cases under the new powers to protect the right to vote granted by Congress in 1957 and 1960--six cases in three years. In terms of the demands of the situation, this is excusable incompetence or indifference by the Department of Justice and the Attorney General. The Civil Rights Commission found some 16 counties to have a majority of voting-age Negroes and not one Negro registered--and not one single voting rights suit has been brought by this Administration in a single one of these counties. The witnesses called for vigorous and widespread use of the powers given by Congress to end all such denials of the right to vote by an Attorney General willing to take bold action and go beyond a handful of token cases.

The last panel was on Executive Action in the fields of employment, housing and public facilities. Governor Latham and Congressman Diggs were co-chairmen, with former Secretary Oscar Chapman and Michigan FEPC chairman Alex Fuller as deputy chairmen. Here, too, the record of recent inaction is almost unbelievable. We heard documented testimony of the failure of Mr. Nixon's Government Contracts Committee in case after case. The fact that in over seven years, under Mr. Nixon's chairmanship, not one single contract has been revoked because of racial discrimination--even though 33 major plants of government contractors were found to have not one single Negro employed--fits in with Mr. Nixon's repeated opposition in the House and the Senate to an effective FEPC. The thrust of the testimony, from people who know and have studied the experience--the record of inaction and failure of Mr. Nixon's committee--is summed up by the simple fact of no action to require compliance. President Truman, in line with the desegregation of the armed services he ordered, set up a Committee on Government Contracts Compliance to require compliance with the clause against discrimination on every government contract. When President Eisenhower and Mr. Nixon took over, they changed the name to "Committee on Government Contracts"--they left "Compliance" out. The importance of

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this power of the Executive Branch to enforce contract compliance--the great opportunity for leadership--is indicated by Mr. Nixon's statement on television that one out of four jobs are allotted by persons holding government contracts. Here is a field where a new Democratic Administration must take vigorous and firm action.

The same thing is true in the field of housing. The Republican Administration has failed to issue the executive order against discrimination in federally-assisted housing recommended unanimously by the Civil Rights Commission over 13 months ago. The Republican candidate has taken no stand on this. Most of the witnesses here supported your long-standing position--and that of the Democratic platform--in favor of such an executive order. The problem is complex, but one place to begin a solution is in the operations of the Federal Government. The principle which panel members, like the Democratic platform, endorse is, in the words of a history-making California case, that "when one dips one's hands into the federal treasury, a little democracy necessarily clings thereto." It was proposed that the antidote to restrictive covenants is an affirmative covenant against racial discrimination running with all federally-assisted housing.

This panel also heard testimony on the need for executive action to end discrimination in all federally-aided facilities, such as airports, and for presidential support of peaceful protests to end discrimination in all public places. One of the student sit-in leaders gave eloquent testimony on the moral issues involved. The need for Presidential moral leadership here, too, was obvious, and your repeated support of the sit-down demonstrations as a new way of the people standing up for their rights was considered most significant and constructive.

In both executive action panels it was proposed that there be established in the White House an office responsible directly to the President to see to it that executive action in civil rights is promptly and vigorously expedited by the responsible federal agencies.

Summing up, the main points made in the testimony were:

1. The new Administration should lose no time in seeking the enactment of a comprehensive civil rights bill, incorporating the platform pledges.
2. White House initiative should be taken, including the holding of a series of White House Conferences, to create the conditions for compliance with the Supreme Court's school desegregation decisions.
3. The next President should see to it that the full powers of the Attorney General are used to prevent further denials of the right to vote.
4. The next President should promptly issue executive orders prohibiting discrimination in federally-assisted housing and reorganizing the Committee on Government Contracts so that discrimination will be ended in the millions of jobs allotted by government contractors.

This is only a sketch of what we have heard and much is omitted. The panels will proceed now to put all this on paper with more specific recommendations. It is my hope, as I am sure it is yours, that these panels will be charged with continuing responsibilities and that you will consult with them after the election as you have now. Meanwhile, let me report that this assembly of Democrats and independent Americans means business about carrying out our historic 1960 platform and we are confident that a new Democratic Administration, under your leadership, will do this job and do it well.

HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL

Remarks of
Senator Hubert H. Humphrey
National Conference on
Constitutional Rights
New York City
8 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 11, 1960

We must never forget that when we
talk about civil rights and about
constitutional rights, we are talking
about human rights, human dignity, and
self-respect for everyone of God's
children on this earth.

Human
Rts

We must carry out the American
promise of human rights and human
freedom -- ~~not just because~~ it is
morally right to do so -- ~~not just~~
~~because~~ it is politically sound.

and ⁽²⁾

~~expedient to do so -- but also because~~

the eyes of a restless world are upon
us.

~~This is part of the Cold War~~

~~struggle.~~

It is imperative from an inter-
national point of view for America to
fulfill its promises of human rights
and human dignity. The peoples of
Asia, Africa and Latin America want
to know whether our deeds measure up
to our words.

They want to know whether our
laws and our high principles are

① Civil Rts

FDR

TRUMAN

2 Acts of Congress

#

Mrs FDRS Birthday

#

Out talent - of Ethnic
Groups

President - Conscience

ignored or flouted. They want to know whether human dignity and human freedom is backed up ~~not only~~ in the White House ^{and in} ~~in~~ every community in America.

↳ We must make it crystal clear that the promise of freedom and human dignity is a promise we are eager to share with the rest of the world -- with all mankind.

↳ Thomas Jefferson declared 160 years ago that America is "an empire for liberty" -- "a standing monument, an example for the aim and imitation of the people of other countries."

Jefferson

I believe the United States of America
can -- and must -- inspire and lead the
way toward a brighter future for all the
world.

But to do so, we must understand
and accept the opportunities for
constructive action to advance human
dignity and human freedom.

The Supreme Court decision of 1954
against segregation of school children
was a landmark of freedom -- a beacon
of hope -- in mankind's eternal struggle
for human dignity.

All Americans are deeply indebted
to our federal courts for upholding

Harry Golden!

human rights and the rule of law -- for upholding the constitutional rights guaranteed to every American.

But our courts cannot -- and should not -- carry the whole burden of human freedom. The vast authority and prestige of the President must back up legal rights. The powerful voice of the President as "conscience to the nation" must help turn legal rights into human rights.

President's Authority must back up Legal Rts

Unfortunately, since 1954, this country has suffered a tragic lack of executive leadership in the broad area of human rights.

The tremendous responsibilities
this Republican Administration has
imposed upon the courts must be shared
by the President and the Congress.

Now realistically, we cannot expect
Congress to move as fast as you and
I would like. There are just too many
opportunities for the experienced
Southern legislators to delay action
on civil rights.

~~But~~ the President -- the only
national leader elected by all the
people -- can use his power and prestige
to lead public opinion -- and to force

Congress into action.

And I am here to tell you that with
Jack Kennedy in the White House you
will see such action by Congress and
the rest of the federal government
as you have never seen before.

Many of the people who advise
delay in acting on civil rights tell
us "You have to change the hearts of
men before you can expect to change
legal sanctions to prejudice."

I would be the first to grant that
nothing is as effective in
guaranteeing human rights and equality
as a change of heart in the people who
harbor feelings of prejudice.



But it is wrong to think that governmental action can do nothing to cause a change of heart. The argument that we must rely exclusively on moral and spiritual regeneration overlooks the distinction between prejudice and discrimination.

Discrimination involves behaviour, action and choice.

Prejudice is a matter of belief, attitude and involunatry feeling.

We seek by law to attack discrimination -- not prejudice.

If we succeed in eliminating discrimination by law, we have reason to expect lessening of prejudice

in the hearts of men will be a by-product
of our success in breaking down the legal
supports to bigotry, intolerance and
discrimination.

I believe the civil rights plank
adopted by the Democratic Party at
Los Angeles is the best statement on
civil rights ever made by any political
party in America.

Our platform says it is the duty of
Congress to enact those laws which are
necessary to protect and promote the
constitutional rights of every American.

And our platform says it is the duty
of the President to see that these

rights are respected -- that the law
of the land is faithfully observed.

It is time for new leadership in
America to end drift and indecision
on the basic, fundamental issues of
human dignity and human rights.

It is time for new leadership from the
White House to advance human dignity
and freedom for all Americans.

We cannot have complete pride in
our nation until every American enjoys
full Constitutional rights.

Every man, woman, and child must
be treated and judged equally as a
human being, and must be given equal
opportunity.

Opportunities for education, employment and recreation must be made equal for each citizen. All Americans must have equal access to voting booths, schoolrooms, jobs, housing, and all public facilities.

We must guarantee constitutional rights to all. And to do the job, the influence and authority of the President of the United States must back up the laws of the land.

This is what Jack Kennedy will do.

He will follow up the words of the Democratic Platform with deeds, with action, with leadership.

And America will once again be a

light and an inspiration to those
who seek human dignity and freedom
-- to all mankind.

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