

[Feb 22nd 1969]

Talk
to
Los Angeles Democratic Luncheon

I am glad to be out here among all these good California Democrats bringing you some good news.

My good news is that the Johnson Administration and the 88th Congress is well on the way to establishing the most productive and progressive legislative record in our history.

The largest tax cut bill Congress has ever passed is on its way to the White House. This \$11½ billion cut is the most significant legislation on economic growth and progress since passage of the Employment Act of 1946.

The House has passed the most comprehensive civil rights act ever presented to Congress - setting the stage for an historic battle in the Senate.

I can tell you that we in the Senate are going to fight to the finish for human rights and answer President Johnson's call for an effective and constructive civil rights bill.

These two measures are the cornerstones of the late President Kennedy's legislative program and our enactment of them will be our memorial to our beloved leader.

But this is only the beginning. We will carry out many other parts of the Kennedy-Johnson program and I want to go on record here and now - without fear of being proven wrong - that when the four years of the Kennedy-Johnson Administration have been completed the record of the 87th and the 88th Congress, both Democratically controlled, will be one of the most outstanding records in the history of the Government of the United States.

I know that every Congress comes in for its share of criticism and certainly the 88th Congress is no exception. But I want to remind my fellow Democrats that you don't improve your situation by joining the bellyacher creak.

We Democrats have a great record and we shouldn't be the least bit bashful in pointing it out to the American people. After all, this is a national election year. The last national election year was in 1960, a hard fought campaign. Incidentally, when I saw that television film recently on "The Making of a President" and watched the Republican candidate in action I wonder how he ever got as many votes as he did.

I am proud to be a part of the Kennedy-Johnson team that is carrying on the programs of the New Frontier. We Democrats belong to the New Frontier. That is still our goal, our objective and our commitment. The Republicans belong to the Lost Horizon, and believe me, they deserve it.

You Democrats here today are the custodians, the stewards, so to speak of a great political party that has been given the responsibility for governing this nation for a four-year period.

Now, you and I are getting ready to go to the people this fall and give a report on what we have done during those four years. What should we tell them?

First of all, we will tell the people that we Democrats inherited a political structure that was creeping along in serious trouble abroad; its money system literally on the rocks in terms of international payments; its prestige abroad at low ebb; unemployment mounting at home and the economy slowing down to a creeping pace, at best.

President Kennedy took over with a promise to get this country moving again. This is a big country and it took a big man, with big ideas and great determination to get the country moving. And we got it moving under his leadership.

We got it moving to the point where today instead of talking about a \$600 billion economy, we have it; where progress is being made against unemployment; where price levels have been stabilized; where our international balance of payments situation is better than it has been in five years. These are just a few of the things.

But more importantly, President Kennedy got this country moving again to the point where the President of the United States can talk about peace today. He can negotiate for peace and not negotiate from fear. He can negotiate from strength - not from weakness. Now we can command respect from the Soviet Union to a point where they are willing, at long last, to talk more reasonably and sensibly about the problems in the world.

This didn't happen easily. You can be proud that your government has strengthened America to a point where it is the uncontested political and military and economic power in the world today. No combination of powers can even stand up against us.

All of this has made it possible for our new President - Lyndon B. Johnson - to offer some overtures to the Russians about disarmament. He can do it safely. Why? Because since 1961 the great President and fallen leader who we loved so much gave this country the tools, the sinew and the strength for our military establishments, our diplomacy, our foreign aid and all that makes up our national security.

Know this record, Be proud of it. This just didn't happen. It was worked on. It was planned. It had to be legislated and it had to be executed and administered. And we did it.

And we will continue to carry on that fine record under the Administration of Lyndon B. Johnson.

I want you to remember those great words in President Johnson's address to the Congress after the death of President Kennedy. "Let us continue," he said. Those three words sum up the central theme of the Johnson Administration.

They also constitute a good platform for Democrats to run on this fall. President Johnson will carry on the programs and policies of President Kennedy because the Kennedy program is his program.

President Johnson played a major role in developing that program. He was a part of the team. I know. I sat there with these men. I worked with them.

We Democrats have an obligation to point out the fine record of the Kennedy-Johnson team and take our case to the people.

--We began an area redevelopment program that helped economically distressed communities throughout the nation.

--We built more nursing homes for our old people in the last $3\frac{1}{2}$ years than in the preceding 200 years.

--We built more housing for the elderly in the last $3\frac{1}{2}$ years than the previous 100 and we broadened the urban redevelopment, public housing and college housing programs.

--We raised the minimum wage and extended its coverage.

--We improved the Social Security program.

--We started a Food Stamp program for the needy, expanded the Food for Peace program and the school lunch and milk program.

And I haven't even come to the so-called "major" actions yet.

--We streamlined the Pentagon and modernized our defense establishments.

--We enacted the most far-reaching Trade Act since the Reciprocal Trade Act fathered by Cordell Hull.

--We have made the greatest advance in the field of mental health and the first major attack on mental retardation by any country in the history of the world.

--We have enacted the broadest, most comprehensive program of aid to education that any free nation in the world has ever known - aid to vocational schools, aid to medical schools, schools of pharmacy, nursing and other professional schools, as well as scholarship aid to college students and federal help for college construction.

This is a proud record. But this is only the beginning. I can tell you we are going to add to it. We ought to be doing more. And we will if we can get rid of some of those reactionaries who stand in our way.

When President Johnson gave his magnificent State of the Union address last month the Republican leader of the Senate said, "Why, that is a blueprint for paradise."

I didn't want to go quite that far, but if he thinks that's the case I'll buy it. There is one thing for sure, you will never get a blueprint for paradise from a Republican. You can rest assured of that.

We Democrats have always taken pride in laying down blueprints for progress,- for daring to dream, for carrying forward programs that will help all the people.

We recognize that our duty is to all people.

That's why we are not indifferent to the plight of the one American in five who doesn't share the good life in this Affluent Society.

That's why President Johnson has declared an all-out war on poverty - an "unconditional war" against poverty wherever it exists - "in city slums and small towns, in sharecropper shacks, in migrant worker camps, and on our Indian reservations, among whites as well as Negroes, among the young as well as the aged, in boom towns and depressed areas."

These are the goals that make the Democratic party worthy of respect - a party of ideals, enthusiasm and conviction. This is the reason we win elections.

I make one plea to my fellow Democrats. Let's enact our programs and conduct our campaigns without tearing anyone apart. Let's not set one section of the country against another; one group against another. Let's not indulge in personalities. Let us conduct ourselves with good manners, good taste and firmness in the right as God gives us the right to see the right.

I think the standard of conduct that we must have in 1964 will have to be judged by whether we are doing what is worthy of the memory of the man who graced this Nation, who commanded the admiration and affection of millions throughout the world - the Captain of the New Frontier who is no longer with us.

We are not going to get into the petty little peeves of politics, nor are we going to indulge in the personal backbiting that is the mark of the small man - the inferior man, as Sam Rayburn used to say. We are going to be working on principles. We are going to be working for a better America.

I say to my fellow Democrats, every one of you who mourned and still mourn the loss of John Kennedy, that the best thing you can do is to be worthy of his faith, worthy of his memory.

The best way I know that you can be worthy of his memory is to see to it that the man he selected as his partner at the Democratic Convention in Los Angeles in 1960 - President Johnson - has our unqualified support and that we serve notice on this nation that we intend to see that he is re-elected with a great and smashing majority.

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