

" We are Confronted Primarily with a Moral Issue. It was as old as the scriptures and was as clear as the American Constitution.

CAPITAL PRESS CLUB DINNER
June 13, 1964

- ⊗ March on Washington (Aug 28)
- ⊗ Inter-Faith Council Rts Apr 28
- ⊗ Closure - June 10 -
- ⊗ Final Action (before 1 yr)

Together We have ~~together~~ reached a great and long awaited

day. It is a day, however, in which we cannot long linger

in pleasant contemplation of the victory. ~~road down which~~ ^{to come}

~~we have ~~come~~ come~~ Our work has just begun.

Moral
Bipartisan
Constitution

Let us continue

Now we must set forth for ourselves the details

for continuation. Our objective is not merely to pass

legislation, it is, rather, to bring the full joy and

power of opportunity and freedom into the lives of all

Americans everywhere,

- and to Legislators but

a beginning

There is no need tonight for me to go into details,

but I ask you to keep in your hearts and minds the following

primary objectives

of our struggle

Civil Rts has compelled us to examine
our needs deficits -

Whitney Young

Poverty, Educ, sickness, unemployment,
Housing, slums, Importance of the ballot
- our cities

- ~~First,~~ ^{Yes} ~~economic~~ Dignity and hope must be

War on
Poverty

brought into the lives of the poor, the aged, the

homeless, whether Negro or white. The war against

poverty must be waged and won.

^{yes, we must} - ~~Second, let us~~ find in our hearts, the political

and institutional capacity to ~~at long last work~~

Educ

~~together~~ to bring the magic spark of good education

to all.

Education is opportunity Education is the key to Freedom.

- ~~Third,~~ With reference to the Civil Rights Bill

itself, let us pray and work for law observance

but also recognize that the law must and shall be

obeyed throughout the land.

And
- - ~~And, fourth,~~ let us remember that civil rights

is not just a bill, not merely a slogan, not a dream

but a guarantee to each individual American to his

right to vote, to an equal chance to work, an opportunity

to be educated, to live and prosper as a free man.

In short, to ~~receive~~ *have* the opportunity to walk

with dignity and freedom. *P* To bring this about will require

many things, by many people, in many places.

Sobering responsibility
A ~~mighty burden~~ will be upon our elected leaders

- - our Mayors, our Governors, our Aldermen, our Sheriffs.

and We must call upon these men to do their public duty, *to* carry

out the law and implement the sense of equity that is so

vital for democracy. That is their duty, and how they

serve will be critical.

But, our public officials will only be able to

do this if the religious leaders, the businessmen, the leaders

of labor, the editors ^{the teachers} in each community, dedicate themselves

to a day-in, day-out effort to create a nation of true oppor-

tunity, and to support - no matter what the pressure, the

complications - those elected officials ^{who show the} ~~in the administration~~

^{Courage to do their duty} ~~of democracy~~. This is the acid test for our nation - the

capacity of our elected leaders to govern wisely, effectively

and courageously in a time of transition, strife, and conflict.

↳ We should be thankful that at least one major

skirmish in a protracted war ^{will soon be} ~~is effectively~~ won. The

conscience of our heritage is once again victorious. For

this we may be thankful.

But we will have missed both the meaning and
the emotion of this hour if we indulge in carping senti-
ments of triumph. What we are involved in, as Lincoln
once said in an earlier conflict, ^{it} is too vast for
bitterness. ^{||} It is surely too vast for gloating.

Let us
not
indulge
in self
praise
for having
done our
duty.

For what the long months and years leading up
to this hour have illuminated is not ^{merely} the struggle of good
men against bad men. It has illuminated instead an age-old
and continuing struggle within all men - a struggle to over-
come irrational legacies, a struggle to escape the bondage
of self, a struggle to substitute love for fear, a struggle
to create a new and better community in which, in truth,
"justice rolls down like waters and righteousness is a
mighty stream."

There are social theorists who claim that the essence of politics is power. They are wrong - even though power is a necessary element in the resolution of conflict. But the essence of politics is not power. It is seeking solutions to problems. It is building a consensus. The essence of politics is asking and re-asking the most difficult of all questions: what is right. In *and then doing Right* a democracy, men of good will rarely differ about ultimate goals, but they do differ vigorously about means, timing and priorities. And these differences are the stuff of unending political discourse.

If you ask me to hate those with whom I disagree in the Senate or within the American or world community, I can only tell you that I cannot and do not.

The search for the public interest is an adversary proceeding among men of equal dignity. Deeply imbedded in our knowledge of the rightness of our present cause must be an awareness of the limitations of our own minds and the evils in our own hearts. If the time ever comes when, in our single-mindedness of purpose, we transfer our hatred of injustice to a hatred of the unjust, we will break the golden strands of political community which bind us together.

Those of us who are privileged to bear some of the major burdens of our time must show by example that we can fight without rancor, win without pride, and on occasion lose without bitterness. Surely it would be one of the ironies and tragedies of history if equality were purchased at the expense of community.

And so, without ^{relaxing} flagging in our efforts to achieve freedom for all men, everywhere, and without delay, I ask that we reaffirm our faith in neighbors who disagree with us on matters of means, timing, and priorities. For like us, these neighbors are fighting against unworthy motives and intractable legacies. Like us they see through a glass darkly in their search for the light.

Underneath the noise and fuss of political battle,
we must preserve our sense of oneness, our sense of mutual
dependence, our need for mutual forgiveness. This is the
eternal paradox of freedom. This is the message of the
saints and sages mankind has agreed to canonize. This
is the only long range hope for a joyful and meaningful
community of men.

This year -
"Freedom Year"

CAPITAL PRESS CLUB DINNER

June 13, 1964

We have together reached a great and long awaited day. It is a day, however, in which we cannot long linger in pleasant contemplation of the victory road down which we have come.

Now, we must set forth for ourselves the details for continuation. Our objective is not merely to pass legislation. It is, rather, to bring the full joy and power of opportunity and freedom into the lives of all Americans everywhere.

There is no need tonight for me to go into details, but I ask you to keep in your hearts and minds the following primary objectives:

--First, economic dignity and hope must be brought into the lives of the poor, the aged, the homeless, whether Negro or white. The war against poverty must be waged and won.

--Second, let us find in our hearts, the political and institutional capacity to at long last work together to bring the magic spark of good education to all.

--Third, with reference to the Civil Rights Bill itself, let us pray and work for law observance but also recognize that the law must and shall be obeyed throughout the land.

--And, fourth, let us remember that civil rights is not

just a bill, not merely a slogan, not a dream but a guarantee to each individual American to his right to vote, to an equal chance to work, an opportunity to be educated, to live and prosper as a free man.

In short, ^{what we seek to assure is} ~~to receive~~ the opportunity to walk with dignity and freedom. To bring this about will require many things, by many people, in many places.

A mighty burden will be upon our elected leaders--our mayors, our Governors, our Aldermen, our Sheriffs. We must call upon these men to do their public duty, carry out the law and implement the sense of equity that is so vital for democracy. That is their duty, and how they serve will be critical.

But, our public officials will only be able to do this if the religious leaders, the businessmen, the leaders of labor, the editors in each community, dedicate themselves to a day-in, day-out effort to create a nation of true opportunity ~~and to support--no matter what the pressure, the complications--those elected officials in the administration of democracy.~~ This is the acid test for our nation--the capacity of our elected leaders to govern wisely, effectively and courageously in a time of transition, strife and conflict.

We should be thankful that at least one major skirmish in a protracted war is effectively won. The conscience of our heritage is once again victorious. For this we may be thankful.

But we will have missed both the meaning and the emotion of this hour if we indulge in carping sentiments of triumph. What we are involved in, as Lincoln once said in an earlier conflict, is too vast for bitterness. It is surely too vast for gloating.

For what the long months and years leading up to this hour have illuminated is ~~not the struggle of good men against bad men. It has illuminated instead~~ ^{the} age-old and continuing struggle within all men--a struggle to overcome irrational legacies, a struggle to escape the bondage of self, a struggle to substitute love for fear, a struggle to create a new and better community in which, in truth, "justice rolls down like waters and righteousness is a mighty stream."

There are social theorists who claim that the essence of politics is power. They are wrong--even though power is a necessary element in the resolution of conflict. But the essence of politics is not power. It is seeking solutions to problems. It is building a consensus. The essence of politics is asking and re-asking the most difficult of all questions: what is right. In a democracy, men of good will rarely differ about ultimate goals, but they do differ vigorously about means, timing and priorities. And these differences are the stuff of unending political discourse.

If you ask me to hate those with whom I disagree in the Senate or within the American or world community, I can only

~~tell you that I cannot and do not.~~ The search for the public interest is an adversary proceeding among men of equal dignity. Deeply imbedded in our knowledge of the rightness of our present cause must be an awareness of the limitations of our own minds and the evils in our own hearts. If the time ever comes when, in our single-mindedness of purpose, we transfer our hatred of injustice to a hatred of the unjust, we will break the golden strands of political community that bind us together.

Those of us who are privileged to bear some of the major burdens of our time must show by example that we can fight without rancor, win without pride, and on occasion lose without bitterness. Surely it would be one of the ironies and tragedies of history if equality were purchased at the expense of the community.

And so, without flagging in our efforts to achieve freedom for all men, everywhere, and without delay, I ask that we reaffirm our faith in neighbors who disagree with us on matters of means, timing, and priorities. ~~For like us, these neighbors are fighting against unworthy motives and intractable legacies. Like us they see through a glass darkly in their search for the light.~~

Underneath the noise and fuss of political battle, we must preserve our sense of oneness, our sense of mutual dependency, our need for mutual forgiveness. This is the eternal paradox of freedom. This is the message of the saints and sages mankind has agreed to canonize. This is the only long range hope for a joyful and meaningful community of men.



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 88th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 110

WASHINGTON, FRIDAY, JUNE 19, 1964

No. 124

CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

The Senate resumed the consideration of the bill (H.R. 7152) to enforce the constitutional right to vote, to confer jurisdiction upon the district courts of the United States to provide injunctive relief against discrimination in public accommodations, to authorize the Attorney General to institute suits to protect constitutional rights in public facilities and public education, to extend the Commission on Civil Rights, to prevent discrimination in federally assisted programs, to establish a Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity, and for other purposes.

Mr. HUMPHREY. Mr. President, 83 days ago the Senate began consideration of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The longest debate in the history of this body is now about to conclude with the passage of this measure.

These have been difficult and demanding days. I doubt whether any Senator can recall a bill which so tested our attitudes of justice and equity, our abilities as legislators, our sense of fairness as individuals, and our loyalty to the Senate as an institution of democratic government. In these historic circumstances, it seems necessary to ask the question: Have we fully met our responsibilities in this time of testing?

One must hesitate to attempt an answer when only history can be the authoritative judge of our efforts in this great debate. But if we are willing to look for more tentative answers, I suggest we consider the wisdom found in a little known address of Benjamin Franklin delivered to the closing session of the Constitutional Convention. The Convention, meeting in Philadelphia in 1787, had labored for many months—from May to September—just as we have labored many months. The Convention contained delegates of many persuasions and opinions regarding the question of Federal union—just as the Senate has been a body of divergent opinion on the issue of civil rights. Despite profound disagreements among the delegates, the Convention persevered—just as we have persevered—and eventually reached agreement on a Constitution to unite the several States.

At the conclusion of these months of bitter debate and frequent discouragement, Dr. Franklin addressed these remarks to the assembled delegates:

Mr. President, I confess that there are several parts of this Constitution which I do not at present approve, but I am not sure I shall never approve them. For having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged by better information, or fuller consideration, to change opinions even on important subjects, which I once thought right but found to be otherwise. It is therefore that, the older I grow, the more apt I am to doubt my own judgment, and to pay more respect to the judgment of others. I doubt, too, whether any other convention we can obtain may be able to make a better Constitution. For when you assemble a number of men to have the advantage of their joint wisdom, you inevitably assemble with those men all their prejudices, their passions, their errors of opinion, their local interests, and their selfish views. From such an assembly can a perfect production be expected? It therefore astonishes me, sir, to find this system approaching so near to perfection as it does. Thus I consent, sir, to this Constitution, because I expect no better and because I am not sure, that it is not the best.

This Senator finds the wisdom of Benjamin Franklin most reassuring in evaluating our months of labor devoted to passing H.R. 7152. If Franklin could express with such humility certain doubts regarding one of the most remarkable political documents ever written, perhaps we can view our respective concerns over the contents of this measure with similar forbearance, tolerance, and charity.

Each Senator must wish that certain decisions regarding H.R. 7152 had been otherwise. Some would desire no bill at all, others a bill with substantial modifications, and still others a far stronger and more comprehensive measure. Each Senator must bring to this moment of final passage—to paraphrase the words of Dr. Franklin—his prejudices, his passions, his errors of opinion, his local interests, and his selfish views. If this is the case, each Senator must be expected to doubt the perfection of the measure we are about to adopt. But this situation prevails with any political decision of historic magnitude.

Yet this Senator stands with Dr. Franklin in also asserting that I will consent to this measure, because I expect no better and because I am not sure it is not the best. I will consent to this measure, because for the first time in recent history the Congress of the United States will say in clear and unmistakable terms: "There is no room for second-class citizenship in our country." Let no one doubt the historical significance of this ringing affirmation which we now deliver to the Nation and to the world.

We shall demonstrate once again that the constitutional system bequeathed to us by such men as Benjamin Franklin remains a viable and effective instrument of government. We have read the political pundits who smugly proclaimed that Congress would never enact a meaningful and comprehensive civil rights bill. We have heard the extremists on both sides call for the defeat or emasculation of this measure. We have experienced our own moments of doubt as to whether or not the Senate would be equal to this momentous task.

So having heard these predictions of doom and collapse and having experienced these moments of doubt and concern, let us now acknowledge that democracy truly lives in the United States of America. The Senate has been equal to this mighty challenge.

What have we sought to do in the Civil Rights Act of 1964—the greatest piece of social legislation of our generation. First, we have dealt with the major problem areas in this Nation's struggle for human rights: voting, public accommodations, public facilities, schools, Federal assistance, and equal employment opportunity. We have attempted to establish a framework of law wherein men of good will and reason can seek to resolve these difficult and emotional issues of human rights. We have attempted to place the burden of this task upon the resources of our local communities and our States,

providing for Federal action only when communities and States refuse or are unable to meet their responsibilities set forth in this act. We have placed emphasis on voluntary conciliation—not coercion. We have, in short, attempted to fashion a bill which is just, reasonable and fair to all persons.

In seeking the objectives, we have also sought to guarantee that the rights and prerogatives of every Senator would be fully protected at every state of this debate. We have attempted to work by the rules and I believe we have—in the main—conducted ourselves with dignity, courtesy, patience and understanding. Whether we have won or lost on this particular issue, we have acquitted ourselves in a manner which speaks well for congressional government in the 20th century.

As the Senate approaches the rollcall on final passage, we must also recognize that this rollcall signifies only the beginning of our responsibilities to this measure. We know that law only provides a framework to which must be added the bricks and mortar of public opinion and acceptance. In this regard, the observations of Benjamin Franklin to the Constitutional Convention contained one final bit of wisdom:

Much of the strength and efficiency of any government, in pronouncing and securing happiness to the people, depends on opinion—on the general opinion of the goodness of the Government as well as the wisdom and integrity of its governors. I hope, therefore, that for our own sakes, as a part of the people, and for the sake of posterity, we shall act heartily and unanimously in recommending this Constitution * * * and wherever our influence may extend, and turn our future thoughts and endeavors to the means of having it well administered.

The delegates who left Philadelphia in 1787 took with them the responsibility of fostering the favorable public sentiment necessary to transform the Constitution from a mere political document into the living compact binding diverse States and people into a true commonwealth. If we are to succeed in "pronouncing and securing the happiness of the people" in 1964, we have the similar responsibility of encouraging the public support which will make civil equality a living fact as well as written law.

In accomplishing this objective a mighty burden will be placed upon our elected leaders—our Governors, our mayors, and our local representatives. We expect these men to do their public duty and to carry out the law with the sense of justice and equity which is so vital to a democratic community. Our public officials, however, will only be able to do this if the religious leaders, the businessmen, the men of the professions, and the leaders of labor dedicate themselves to a total effort to create a nation of true opportunity.

To assist in this effort I have proposed that Governors' conference be convened in every State—north, south, east, and west—and that the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the U.S. Civil Rights Commission organize similar meetings. I am confident that a national conference on civil rights would also serve a most constructive purpose.

We have before us a great opportunity to strive for a true community of peoples, where neighbors regard each other with charity and compassion, and where Americans of all races live together in harmony and good will. We must go to the people of America with the message that men are needed to seek peaceful, constructive, and positive responses to the blight of discrimination, segregation, and prejudice. We must call upon every American—from the President in Washington to the schoolchild in Minnesota—to become active participants in this crusade for human dignity.

There are political theorists who claim that the essence of politics is power. They are wrong—even though power is a necessary element in the process of politics. The essence of politics in a democracy is the search for just solutions to the fundamental problems of society. The essence of politics is the asking and reasking of the most difficult of all questions: What is justice? What is right? Men of good will seldom differ about ultimate goals, but these men do differ vigorously about means, timing, and priorities. These differences are the stuff of unending political discourse.

The search for the public interest is an adversary proceeding among men of equal dignity. Deeply imbedded in our knowledge of the rightness of our present cause must be an awareness of the limitation of our own minds and the evil in our own hearts. If the time ever comes when, in our single-mindedness of purpose, we transfer the hatred of injustice to a hatred of the unjust, we will break the strands of political community which bind us together.

Those of us who are privileged to bear some of the burdens of this struggle must demonstrate by example that we can fight without rancor, win without pride, and, on occasion, lose without bitterness. Surely it would be one of the ironies of history if equality were purchased at the expense of the community. We must solemnly pledge that this will never come to pass.

What we are involved in, as Lincoln once said in an earlier conflict, is too vast for bitterness. We are engaged in the age-old struggle within all men—a struggle to overcome irrational legacies, a struggle to escape the bondage of ignorance and poverty, a struggle to create a new and better community where "justice rolls down like waters and righteousness is a mighty stream."

So much remains to be done in America. We must bring economic dignity and hope to the lives of the poor, the aged, the homeless, whether Negro or white. We must work together to bring the blessings of education and enlightenment to every American, regardless of race or color. The war against poverty and illiteracy must be waged and won.

As we enact the Civil Rights Act of 1964, then, let us be exalted but not exultant. Let us mark the occasion with sober rejoicing, and not with shouts of victory. And in the difficult months ahead, let us strive to preserve our sense of oneness, our attitude of mutual dependency, and our need for mutual forgiveness. For this is the eternal paradox of freedom. This is the message of the saints and sages which mankind has agreed to canonize. This is the only true hope for a joyful and just community of men.



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