

Book & Author Luncheon
Speech by Hubert H. Humphrey.

January 13, 1965

Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Mr. Friendly,
my friend Al. Ayl right, it's a good start.

I feel singularly honored and privileged to be in the
company of bona fide authors, good authors, and to be
privileged to participate in a gathering where our fine
citizens are giving some time to the thought of a book,
and reflection upon the authors and the books.

I must say that up until just a moment ago I was
happy, I was content, I felt that the future would be
bright and worthy of anyone that had an optimistic out-
look on life, but now I find from Mr. Friendly that after
Wednesday next that I'll be in mothballs, I'll be
corseted - I don't know with what, but apparently I will
be. In other words, a sad chapter will come into my life.
I want to say that this isn't what President Johnson told
me at all when we were in Atlantic City. I have been led
to believe that I was approaching the summits, the heights
of good living, that I would be able to preside over the
United States Senate and for the first time look down
upon my colleagues, but I have such great respect for
journalism and for the authenticity and objectivity of
the American press that I know now that my future is, if
not uncertain, at least it's not going to be too pleasant.
But I intend to do something about that, I want you to
know.

Well, I am here to talk about a book, first of all, I hope you buy it. It's a very good book for anyone to read that's interested at all in the Great Society, and if any of you are applicants for federal positions, do read it. That's good advice. And, may I add that if I could get every Civil servant to read it, I would have a bestseller. And if I were giving advice, well, I won't go any further. This book is, as has been indicated, dedicated to an interpretation of Liberalism as an American practices it and sees it, and I thought I would just read a few lines, and then I shan't spend any more time on the book, as such. But this is what Hubert Humphrey believes about American Liberalism:

The state of Lib^{al}ertism in America is good. Its appeal in the other parts of the world is growing, but we must not for a moment let this infect us with complacency. The enduring strength of American Liberalism is that it recognizes and welcomes change--welcomes change as an essential part of life and moves to seize rather than to evade the challenges and the opportunities that change presents. It is basically an attitude toward life rather than a dogma. Characterized by a warm heart, an open mind and willing hands. Without warm heart, it would lack its essential sensitivity and responsiveness to the

needs and the aspirations of people at home and abroad. Without an open mind it would lack the essential ability to recognize new problems and to think through new solutions. Without the willingness to act, and act boldly, it would lack the characteristic ability to transmute feelings and thoughts into meaningful deeds. This is ^{WHAT} ~~WHY~~ I have found, at least under my own definition, to be an American Liberal. Ever conscious of the great achievements of our past and ever confident about our future.

This book will emphasize the theme of optimism, without a Pollyannish attitude about the difficulties that face us. I happen to believe that a free people cannot afford to be morose. I want to believe that freedom is an exhilarating and an exciting experience. I further believe that public service in a free nation in free institutions should be public service of great dedication, - almost selflessness in which out of the dedication and selflessness you get everything -- the joy of knowing that you are part of history. But I think even more importantly, the realization that you are helping to make a better life. So, in these pages of, well, about 170 -- large type -- easy to read -- wide margins -- in these pages I try to outline my philosophy of politics and I try to live that philosophy

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of politics. In my campaign I was dubbed "The Happy Warrior". I enjoyed it. I want to let you know that the only regret that I had about the campaign was that I got a little tired the last day or so, but other than that it seemed to me like it was one of the most refreshing and rewarding and challenging experiences of my life. It is the sort of experience that few have, and if many more had it, they would like American politics a little better.

Now, let me say a word or two as a sort of diversion from the book, but this is a gathering at a luncheon for books and authors. This Administration is dedicated to the fulfillment of the bold objective of the Great Society. It's also dedicated to a war -- a war on poverty. The challenge or the vision of the Great Society is not new. Ever so often now, somebody comes out with a little piece that points out that so-and-so back in the year 1830 wrote about the Great Society, that somebody wrote about it in 1907. I never try to remember those names; that's what you hire people to do. You ask them to look those things up. But the Great Society is in a sense what mankind has been striving for since the dawn of history, and we have made great strides towards it. The war on poverty, surely the war on poverty, is as old as the prophets. Because mankind

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has wept over his trials and tribulations and the great prophets and teachers have tried to outline ways and means of lifting the burden of poverty and hunger and disease and nakedness from mankind and from humanity. Now, we wage a war on poverty and we have learned --- I think we are learning --- I am not sure, but I hope so --- that a Great Society is not necessarily one that is rich in worldly goods. That helps, if it is properly used, and if it is properly valued. A Great Society isn't necessarily one in which the power of the military or of the diplomacy is supreme. Truly, what we are talking about are moral values, and we are trying to build a society of justice, a society in which there is a constant process of emancipation, because emancipation is a continuing -- a continuing struggle. Emancipating ourselves in this war against poverty, emancipation of the poverty of the purse. This, by the way, is the easiest thing to overcome. We can do this very quickly, because we have learned a great deal about economics. We have learned much less about ethics. We practice our economics with greater certainty and with, I would say, heartier spirit than we do our ethics.

The poverty that I am concerned about is not only the poverty of unemployment, but the after-effects, the effects of unemployment. Not merely the economic effects, but the hopelessness, the frustration, the feeling of not being wanted, the feeling of knowing that you're not

really "up to it," that somehow or another you have missed a whole chapter in the life of a nation or in a period of a civilization. And, there are today, in our midst, hundreds of thousands, yea millions, and many of them regrettably very young people, that know deep down in their soul and heart, that they are not equipped, either intellectually or spiritually, or vocationally, for their proper place in the Great Society, and there cannot be a Great Society for some. It must be one for all.

Now, I am one that believes that one should provide food for the hungry, not necessarily only as charity, even though there is nothing wrong in charity. Charity is an expression of one's humanity and compassion. But I do believe that there are other foods that are necessary too -- food for the minds, food for the soul, and food for the spirit. Indeed, when I mention soul and spirit, that's what differentiates man from animal, and that's what differentiates a free man from one who has never had the privilege of freedom. Because it is soul and spirit that gives us meaning to human dignity, and it is only through human dignity that there is any justification for the exercise of the political institutions of freedom.

So I speak of books then in this final moment of mine with you. Books as sold as food for the mind, food for the intellect. And, every luncheon that we have, every

gathering that we have about books and authors, is to the good. The trouble is we don't have enough of them.

The President in his message on education reminded us that there were all too few communities that had libraries in their schools, and the District of Columbia was the most infamous of them all for a long period of time. I remember a few years ago here, when I had some young people come to see me, and showed me the condition of their books in the Nation's Capital. I will not take your time except to tell you that we did finally appropriate almost a million dollars for new books. But, books that were a disgrace to any society in the Capital of a nation that represented freedom throughout the world. Libraries, non-existent in many of our elementary schools and junior high schools. Librarians, something you wrote about, read about, but never met. Fortunately, we are making some progress here now in the District of Columbia, but we ought to make much more. The per capita expenditure for books for the schools in the District for libraries were less than 50¢. In my home city of Minneapolis, \$4.00. That wasn't the highest, by the way; that was a median. Now I would suggest that we are beginning to find out that books are as important -- maybe much more important -- yes, much more important than bricks and mortar, and as important as the teacher.

And, President Johnson, in his message on education, said to us: "Many schools have an average of less than one-half book per child." He found that two out of every three public elementary schools have no libraries at all. And one out of five have a trained librarian, four without any librarians. Therefore the President has recommended a book program -- books for students, books for libraries, of \$100 million a year -- not much, but a beginning -- and may I add that with the help of the citizenry, it can be more than a beginning.

I want to call to your attention the possibility of two little additions to this. I believe in a great deal of self-help, but I also believe that the duty of Government is to seek justice for those that are the citizens of the Government, that the Government is to serve. A free book program for students in the underprivileged groups of our communities is every bit as important as a free school lunch. And we ought to have it. The whole emphasis on federal aid to education now is for those that are behind, for those that have been denied some of the benefits of modern civilization. We have community action programs to help those that are culturally-deprived, or whatever you wish to call them, those that just didn't get a break.

May I submit one of the best things we can do is to add to the book program in large doses. Reading is a habit as well as a technique. And a slow learner is frequently the

poor reader, and you don't learn how to read just by going through exercises, you learn by practice as well as the instruction in the techniques of reading. Each boy and girl in America ought to have the private possession of a small library, he ought to start out in his youth so that he'll build it in his adulthood. Libraries ought not just to be public, they should be private. And we ought to develop in this country a love of books as great as, amongst our young people, the love of an automobile. And we can. Because books can be fascinating, if they are obtainable, if they are at hand. And may I say to the librarians and to the sellers of books, if you would make your paperbacks as readily accessible to students as the cigarette manufacturers do of their products, you would be surprised how many more students read books. I see no reason why a PTA, or some other group cannot establish in any school, public, private or parochial, a little bookshelf where the books are not only for the purpose of checking out and checking in, but where you sell them. If you can have a Coke machine, you can have a book machine, so to speak. And, by the way, this is not original with me, very few people have original thoughts. I did find, however, a page or two in a publication by Robert E. Newman, Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Chicago, entitled "A Book Is To Buy", and here's this little article and it says, "whatever the elementary child's motivation may be, we learn he does

buy paperbacks and he will once he learns and gets the habit, he will continue it. Well, I mentioned to Kay Graham here a while ago that we could even be so inventive, ingenious and bold as to even suggest that in these areas where we have youngsters, families that are economically prostrate, that are the victims of what we call the poverty of our time, just as we give these families food stamps, so that they can supplement their diets, because we know that good diet is necessary for good health, so we could provide for those youngsters in these schools where we are attempting to expand their area of learning, book stamps so that they could buy good books. Now, I want to make it clear that I have not cleared this with the Administration. I am presently unemployed, and I thought that before I took on those heavy burdens of the office of Vice Presidency, I should exercise my freedom to the utmost, and if anybody should complain of these pronouncements saying "Now is this in the Administration's program"? - say, "I gather not". But, may I suggest that somewhere along the line, you might mention it to your Congressman or your Senator. You might even mention it to your President. I shall. And, may I also add, in conclusion, that, thank goodness that we have as President a man who started his career of public service as a teacher and who gave his first

check for books and wholesome recreation for the students in that little school where he started his educational teaching career.

I have a feeling that this President is going to go down in the history of America as The Educator, as the one who did more for education in his Administration than any before him. And if that's the case, his name will be honored for generations yet to come. Thank you.



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