

Tell of Progress in Civil Ets - Encourage voice of reason on the campus!

THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20210

Recruitment to a Company
Promotion in a company - on merit

⊗ Clue Era!

Emphasis -
Preparation + then job
new Day - Tell
young to apply -

PLANS FOR PROGRESS PROGRAM

Business Executives Meeting
Stephen Decatur House
Washington, D. C.

Nursing, Medicine, Law, Engineering
Space Educ.

Professors open -
April 28, 1965 4:00 p.m.

Government Services
Local, State + Fed
Hosp, Soc Welf,

3:45 - 4:00	Registration	
4:00 - 4:03	Welcome	Hon. Hobart Taylor, Jr. Associate Counsel to the President; Executive Vice Chairman, The President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity
4:03 - 4:20	Remarks	Hon. Hubert H. Humphrey Vice President of the United States
4:20 - 4:40	Remarks	G. William Miller, President, Textron, Inc., Chairman, Advisory Council on Plans for Progress
4:40 - 5:00	Briefing	P. Burt Lewis, Administrative Director Plans for Progress
5:00		Hon. W. Willard Wirtz Secretary of Labor

Mr Miller } Plans
Mr Lewis } Progress

* * * * *

Reception - 5:30 - 7:30

INFORMATION

FROM THE
PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE
-ON-
EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY
Washington 25, D. C.

REMARKS OF VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
AT THE MEETING OF NEGRO BUSINESS EXECUTIVES PARTICIPATING
IN VICE PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE TO NEGRO COLLEGES AND
HIGH SCHOOLS, DECATUR HOUSE, WASHINGTON, D.C.,
APRIL 28, 1965

We are here for a very important reason, and you are fully aware of it. I am not going to take any time for preliminary explanation. This effort of the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, and its Plans for Progress program --- and many of you represent the corporations that are partners in this endeavor --- is one that fulfills the objectives of our nation and of the expressed will of the Congress and of the President. And that is that we shall promote to our maximum capacity this concept of equality of opportunity that is so much a part of our national structure and of our commitment. I guess another way of putting it is simply this : We have arrived at a time in the history of our country when we know that it is absolutely essential that we encourage the best in people, and that we encourage the best of performance from everybody.

I have the privilege, ladies and gentlemen, as serving as the Chairman of the Space Council. This is by law, and when President Johnson was a United States Senator he was the author of the Act. It set up our Space Council, and when he became Vice President he was its first Chairman. I am privileged now to be the second person in that position. The space activities underscore one particular aspect or facet of American life --- excellence.

You just can't get out there in outer space with one of those capsules unless everything is working "tip-top." I guess that's why the spokesman for the astronauts, or the astronauts themselves, when they speak of their activities in orbit say, "A-OK", not just OK. OK means they are in trouble; "A-OK" means everything is all right. I have met some of the folks here today who are working for companies that have helped develop our space vehicles. I noticed one of the gentlemen here from the McDonnell Aircraft. The Gemini capsule --- the Gemini III --- was a product of the supervision, the management, and the manufacturing of McDonnell Aircraft, and some of the subcontractors with that great company. That capsule had to be perfect, and the people who made it had to be very capable. The workers who worked on it had to have skill and craftsmanship. In fact, the Titan booster, the rocket that was used, had a problem for a moment with the engine. You may recall that on the last space shot there was a hold for about 20 minutes. Well, they got the mechanics down there, and one skilled mechanic finally found out --- in less than 20 minutes --- what was wrong. He knew just what was wrong. He was good --- he was the best.

I found out about that fellow, and sent him a letter, because ordinarily the people who get letters are, you know, the presidents of the companies --- the big ones. It is sort of like when you are Vice President --- you get the letters and your staff does the work. That is, you take out the good ones and give them the bad ones.

This is just another way of saying that the time is at hand when we need to ask of the

American people their best. Also, the time is at hand when we need to ask every American to get into the act --- and not only ask them to, but make it possible for them to participate. For they must if this nation of ours is to fulfill its responsibilities.

We can't do it with 3/4 of our people being participants, and of the 3/4 only 50% doing their best. We need for all of our people to be participants --- and we need all of them doing the very best that they can do.

This is why the emphasis this day is one on education. The President of the United States is a born educator --- his first job was as a teacher. I believe that that position has molded his life, and in a sense deepened his commitment to the cause of training and education.

But once you get the training and education, you have got to make sure that there is an opportunity for the use of that training and education. And that's what we are here about now.

In recent years, we have placed more emphasis upon our schools, more emphasis upon training and re-training, and more emphasis upon professional competence and skill than at any other time in our national life. The reason is quite obvious. We are in a life and death struggle in the world --- we have the responsibility of world leadership --- our economy is highly competitive. Those of you who represent industry here know that each and every one of our industries is in a highly competitive position with some other company, and unless you are on the ball, as they say, unless you are doing your job, you will

soon be out of the ball game. There just will not be any place for the company or for you.

So we are at a time when we need to encourage the best performance of the American people. I have been interested for a goodly long period of my life in equal opportunity, in civil rights. I want to let you in on the actual truth of my philosophical commitment to this.

I came from a small town --- from a Mid western family. We didn't really know there were any problems of civil rights. That's a fact! It was a little parochial community. But I did have one wonderful advantage. My father brought me up to believe everybody was important. And he brought me up to believe that each and every person has something to give if you but let them. He also brought me up to believe that we should ask people to share of their talents and abilities, and we ought to encourage their development.

We all have some capacity, some abilities, and it is not right to hide our light under a bushel. It is surely not right for a social structure or social system to snuff out that light or to push it aside.

So we are now at a point in our national history when the key word is opportunity --- when at long last the theoretical commitments or the sentimental commitments that we have made to equal treatment, to equality of opportunity, have now become real commitments. And that is what you are here about --- that is why you are here.

We want you to do a job for us. The government is reaching out and asking some help from you who have made it --- who are successes and each one of you has a success story unto yourself. Each one of you has earned your own way, you

have proven yourself. I would like to think that I have in a sense proven myself, and that each of us here in our own little way have made our way --- some of us with obstacles greater than others, some with talents greater than others. In our own way we have come along. Now it is our responsibility to encourage others to do it.

You say, "Why should we have to encourage anybody?" The word is out, isn't it, that everything is all right? Well I will tell you why you have to encourage somebody.

First of all, to get right down to cases and minority groups, the word was out for so long that you didn't have a chance, that now, when the word is out that you do have one, people are suspicious. That's a fact!

For a long, long period of time, Negroes went to college, got a good education, and when they ended up there weren't any jobs for them, and if they got one, they generally were below their capacities --- way below their training. So after about a hundred years of that kind of reception, the word sort of gets out that it doesn't make much difference how well you are trained --- if you are just not the right color, or the right religion, or the right group, you are not going to make it.

But, the fact of the matter is, there is a new day. There really is a new day. There is a whole brand new world, and we are having a tough time getting the message out.

Now you know it --- and some of your more intimate friends know it. But this is a very noisy world we live in, and you would be surprised how difficult it is to

get any one to listen.

But at a time when there is international crisis, when there are competing voices for every conceivable cause, and every conceivable product --- when you come out to tell people that for a hundred or more years have been told: "Get to the back of the line." "Get to the back of the bus." "I am sorry, but you are not the one we want!" when that kind of atmosphere has permeated the whole social structure for a hundred years or better, it takes a little doing to get people to believe that the atmosphere has changed. It takes more than the passage of a law, and it takes more than a speech from the Vice President, or the Secretary of Labor, or the President of the United States. It takes performance.

How are we to do it, then?

Number one, we have to show that we mean business --- and we do! That's what the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity is all about --- that's what the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is all about --- that's what the Voting Rights Bill before Congress is all about. We not only mean business, we mean to see to it that those who stand in the way of equal opportunity are selected out as those who should "get the business" so to speak. They are not the ones who are helping America.

Now, having said that, what does it mean?

Well, first of all, it means that we have to encourage people for preparation. Every once in a while, you know, when a new day arrives, people think, "Just get on -- it's free -- let's have it." There were people who, when the new religions were launched, thought that all they had to do was just profess it, rather than to work at it.

There are people, I suppose, who feel that now that we have passed the Civil Rights Bill that all you need do is just set back and wait, and it will all come your way. Well, you know better than that. As a matter of fact --- and this is one of the things that we need to tell our young friends --- now that the Civil Rights Bill is passed, now that the government is committed to the program of equal opportunity, the competition is going to be rougher than ever. But, if you have got it, if you have got what it takes, and if you will apply yourself, and prepare yourself, you are going to get your chance.

This is the message we have to take now to the young people of America.

We have to tell them:

Number one, prepare for a job. That means dig into it, get to work, make up your mind what you want to do, prepare for a job. And number two, when you prepare for a job, apply. If you have any trouble, go find someone who will help you, because there are going to be a number of people who are not going to hear the message of new opportunity.

We have had some experience with this. In our governmental structure today, there are more and more people regardless of race, color, or creed who are getting equal opportunity. But for quite a period of time the message didn't get across. It took a little doing. It took some recruiting. We actually had to go out and solicit and find the people.

You are going to have to do this. You are going to be asked to go out to the high schools and colleges. You are going to be asked to talk to Negro students,

and you are going to be asked to say to the high school students, "You have to prepare yourselves --- go on to college, or to a technical school, or go on to a vocational school, or go on to a professional school." Then you are going to have to say to the college student, "You must really apply yourselves --- the competition is rough. Select your vocation, your profession." And to the college graduate, you should say, "Look, there is an opportunity awaiting you." And there is an opportunity awaiting them in thousands of fields. You know --- some of you work for companies that will have to do a little hiring .

The Secretary of Labor is Chairman of an employment task force in this city and is going to ask employers in the United States --- and the Vice President is going to ask employers in the United States --- to get busy and open up their doors and hire people. This applies particularly to young people, young men and women who are going to be walking the streets unless they are hired. Give them work experience, give them the chance for some practical work experience as a part of their education --- it will be a good economic investment and a good social investment.

But I think what you are going to be mainly asked to do, and what I am going to ask you to do, is to bring the message of hope --- and not only the message of hope, but the message of a New Day to the people you talk to, the people who are educated, the people who are trained, and the people who have the will to work and find a job. We are going to help them. You are going to help them. You are not just going to make that speech --- we are not going to let you off that easy. You are

going to have to not only encourage people, but you are going to have to help them, if they seek your help, to find that place where they can develop their talents, and where they can develop their human capacities.

Now I would just like to speak to you on this point for a minute. I just left a new veteran's hospital about an hour ago. This is one of three big ones that we are dedicating. We are going to provide the best of medical care for our veterans. We have a whole new health program underway in this country. As a result there are new chances for careers. The opportunities for people today --- for every person, it makes no difference what your region, your race, your religion --- the opportunities are there. There is no doubt about it --- there is a desperate need for more doctors and nurses, and medical technicians. There is a need for them in the government hospitals, in private hospitals, in the medical clinics --- a desperate need.

We need to encourage young ladies in these colleges to go into medical technical training, dental technical training, secretarial training. We have a very difficult time finding good secretaries. We must let them know that they are needed, but that they are going to be hired on the basis of their merit and their competence and capacity to do the job, not on the basis of sympathy, not on the basis of guilt --- a number of us have every right to feel guilty about the way people have been treated.

There is a great opportunity in the law. The government of the United States, state governments, local governments, and the many other jurisdictions need young

men and young women trained in the law. I don't mean you all get to be general counsel the first week, but we need people trained in the law, and we need to have these young people understand that the hiring will be done on a basis of equal treatment --- and promotions will be made on merit. When you have it, you are going to get promoted. I think it is mighty important that people understand that.

There is going to be a great need of people in engineering. Engineering is a profession today that has a shortage. We are going to need people in the space program. Right now many of our space engineering companies and space development companies are in desperate need of competent, trained people. And by the way, the space program is going to grow every year --- every year in the foreseeable future.

Now if we can get this message of hope, and of excitment, and of challenge to the people, to the young people that you are going to talk to, they are going to respond.

I want to leave this thought with you: Remember you are going to be talking to people who have been told for a long time that even though they got the education there wasn't much at the end of the line for them. You are going to stand out there and say: "That's all wrong. Here I am. And I got mine under even more difficult circumstances."

There is nothing better than a living witness. Just like in church, you know sometimes you can just stand up and be witness. A living witness --- the example --- you are the example of what can happen, and you are the example of what's going to

happen a thousand times over.

To be frank about it, you were the pioneers, and you had some rougher days, and you have got to go out now and banish cynicism. A lot of people are very cynical, not because they want to be, but because they think there is reason to be. We are going to help wash away that cynicism by the example of your presence, by the example of your word, by the example of your challenge, and by just citing what the facts are.

This is a new day, a new age. Everybody knows it is the space age, everybody knows it is the nuclear age --- everybody talks about these things. Everybody says it is the age of change. Well, a lot of things are changing, and one of the most important things that's changing is the whole pattern of human relations. And that change is taking place now.

What we need is to spell it out in capital letters. We need to get people to understand, in their own hearts, that the change has taken place. Half of the victory that we seek is in the hearts of the person who seeks the victory himself, who seeks his own achievement, when he feels that the day is here for the day of promise. The day of his achievement is here then, --- we are going to make the breakthrough. And that is what I want, and what you want, and what this nation so desperately needs.

You are really being called upon to lead a war. You are soldiers in the battlefield against apathy, and indifference, and intolerance and discrimination. You are the living hero. You came through, you have been at these battlegrounds.

Many of your fellow men fell along the way but you lasted. You have been decorated. Many of you are officers of big companies, and highly respected officers of very big companies, representing the best in American industry. Now you are going to go out there and show that it can be done. You are going to be able to tell these young folks, "Look, when I went there and tried it, ten fellows fell by the wayside. But I got through. When ten march up this time, nine of us are going to get through, and maybe one will fall by the wayside -- and that one may fall because he didn't try or because he didn't have it."

I think that's the message. That's what I really want to ask you.

I personally want to thank you for joining the battle for equal opportunity. I want to thank you for joining as soldiers in what we are trying to do --- to create this Great Society in which human values are the precious values.

You just get on out there now and just give it to them, and don't you hesitate, and don't you be afraid to speak up and answer questions, and frankly say that your government, which you represent, and your industry, which you represent, is on the side of that individual who seeks this opportunity.

We are on their side, and I want to tell you when you can get Uncle Sam on your side --- the Government of the United States --- and get American Industry on your side, and American labor on your side, and the Secretary of Labor on your side, that's pretty good. And if you want the Vice President, he's there on your side, too.



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