

SPEECH BY VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT H. HUMPHREY BEFORE THE  
UNITED STATES CIVIL DEFENSE COUNCIL AT THE SHERRATON PARK  
HOTEL, WASHINGTON, D.C., ON MAY 12, 1965.

Thank you very much, my fellow-countrymen, Wally Helstead and members of the United States Civil Defense Council. I am very happy once again being with you. I have special greetings for Mr. Stevenson and to all of your board members.

It seems like the last time we were together was, I believe, in the Twin Cities, up in Minneapolis, and sometime earlier than that I was with some of you at -- none of the ladies, because you all look too young -- up in New York. We had a wonderful session there. I do just want to let you know how much your government appreciates the good things that you are doing, your civic service, your leadership -- because you are the leaders in making possible this extra arm of our security and of our defense and of our protection because that's the way I look at the civil defense organization. It relates to not merely the wartime needs of the Nation or the defense needs of the Nation, but it actually relates in these days to the humanitarian needs of the Nation. And each and every one of you have been performing service beyond the call of duty in your respective States and areas. I do want to pay my compliments to Bill Durkee and to Hubert Schon. Hubert, of course, is -- there are very few of us Huberts around anyway, I might add. But Hubert's a Minnesotan and I think he's done an extraordinarily good job here. We have a number of people from my home State in this audience. I would hesitate to select them out lest you might think I am parochial in my interest, and I realize now that I am not the Senator from the State of Minnesota, I am the Vice-President

of the United States. I must have wider horizons, you see, than I had the last time that I met you. Truly, it's very fortunate for us that you are here in the Nation's Capital on matters before the Congress that relate to your organizational structure and the possibilities of you, of our, civil defense system doing its job. I was very happy to have worked in the Congress, to be of help to the civil defense organization. I think many of you recall that we visited from time to time on legislative matters; I have never known that your requests were unreasonable, and I have always known that what you requested was a minimum of the need for this country.

I can speak with some authority today in reference to what civil defense means and what the people in this great organization mean to our Nation and to the respective States. The State of Minnesota this year has been afflicted by unbelievable trouble and vast, tremendous damage. We had one of the roughest winters that we've ever experienced in recent history, then came the spring and the floods with the mighty Mississippi out of control, the Minnesota River and others, taking a toll of property and of lives. Civil defense workers were there; civil defense leaders were on the job, and I wonder if people realize what terrible destruction might have taken place, an unbelievable pandemonium and confusion could have beset every community had it not have been for the leadership and the work of the civil defense personnel. I saw your people at work -- I say your people because this is a civilian force, for good, for order and for help and protection. Only this past weekend I saw civil defense at work in the tornado-stricken areas of my State. I am sure that Minnesotans have already bothered you about this, but when some 1,500 homes were damaged, some 401 communities destroyed totally -- as if they had been bombed out by the worst bombing attack that you could think of -- you know the tragedy

that befell a people in the State. And there was civil defense -- along with others, yes; the National Guard was there, yes; the Red Cross was there; people of different groups, there to help. The most marvelous experience that I encountered for many a day was to go home and to see people from other parts of the city come to help those in distress in a far-away suburban section, people who really amplified the concern for their neighbor. But all of this would not have been possible were it not for the fact that people had been trained, the people had leadership, that there were supplies, that there were people who knew what to do when the moment of crisis and of disaster fell. So, if these words of thanks and appreciation to you are helpful, then I am indeed pleased, because you mean a lot to our country. In the days of uncertainty, internationally -- we surely live in those days, and by the way, we are going to live in them for years to come; we just have to be prepared for that -- there isn't any easy answer to these world problems. If the American people tire, if the American people become weary, if the American people become careless, then you can rest assured that the cause of freedom will die, because we are its most powerful custodian and steward. If we don't have the strength and patience to persevere, then whom do you expect will have it? And if we are unable to meet that enemy, then whom do you expect will have the vitality and the means to meet that enemy? You are a part of the total force of this Nation, you are part of the total mobilization of a country when needed. I am one of those that believes that when we face the kind of peril that is on the horizon and will be there for years to come that it would be nothing short of suicide for us to do less than we are doing and it surely would be a tragedy if we failed to take care of the responsibility



that is ours. So when you think of your role, today, think of it as being a part of the defense of this Nation in depth. I have been privileged, as Vice President, to know what our problems are, and what our strength is, and what could happen to this country if we ever faced -- if we ever were attacked -- and all I can say is that once I came to know these things I knew then more than ever how much you're needed.

You can take that message home. You have to tell people the fact that you have not been called upon to rescue a Nation that has been attacked. It's a blessing!

It is hard to keep your people feeling this sense of civic responsibility without immediate crisis. But that's the way it must be. We must learn how to be alert, on guard, resilient, able to resist attack every moment of our lives without being belligerent, without being mobilized like we live in a police state, without having to take dictation from on high. I think part of the task of civil defense is to teach people citizenship responsibility, to teach them that the only way this nation can meet its responsibilities as a nation is for us individually to be ready to perform our duties. And you are doing that. You can do it even more.

Well, Wally, I wanted only to come by to wish you well. I have a meeting at Congress, and we have a full day ahead of us. I have sort of been on the circuit this noon, but possibly one of the duties of the vice president or should I put it this way, one of his privileges -- is to come and thank his fellow Americans for what they do. Sometimes you think we don't appreciate it, but we do; your President does, your Vice President does, your Congress does. I think another privilege of the Vice President is to come and encourage you to even do better because all of us know that we can do a little better -- this doesn't mean we haven't done well, it means

we may just have to do better. And if today I have given you a word of commendation which you believe is sincere, then I am most grateful. If I have been able to give you a word of inspiration, then I will feel that I have done my job. With that I want to bid you farewell and to thank you very much for permitting me to come to your group to talk to you today.



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