

REMARKS OF VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT H. HUMPHREY  
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There is an old joke about the man who sent a postcard from the beach to his psychiatrist. The postcard read:

"Having wonderful time. Why?"

Today the great majority of Americans are, in effect, having a wonderful time. We are in a period of unprecedented economic expansion. Our people are well-fed, well-clothed, well-housed and more. And we are doing our utmost to bring these benefits to those in our society who do not presently enjoy them.

We are making our American life materially better. But we are also making it culturally and spiritually better. We are striving to create a society of choice in which each young child can look ahead to a future in which he can reach outward to the limit of his talent, of his self-expression, of his imagination.

I think it is true to say that today, in this country, human society has reached its fullest development thus far in human history.

Yet, in the midst of all this, there is an undeniable restlessness. There are undeniable dissatisfactions.

And -- lest I be misunderstood -- I regard restlessness and dissatisfaction as positive attributes of our society.

But, getting back to today's unease . . . it is felt in all political directions.

A few months ago a former Senate colleague of mine, Barry Goldwater, wrote a letter to the Wall Street Journal, in which he said, in part:

"I really believe that there is apprehension in this country and I feel almost a frustration in not being able to put my finger squarely on it or come up with answers . . . "

At the other end of the spectrum, a young spokesman of the so-called New Left, Todd Gitlin, recently wrote in The New Republic of "deep distempers" in American society which "are barely scratched by the traditional liberal instruments of change; gradual legislation and the ballot box."

I sense a common note in the anxieties of these two very diverse commentators-- and in much of the restlessness in our society.

Senator Goldwater has warned often of the danger of big government. Mr. Gitlin writes with alarm of a "tightly-planned corporate complex" whose power, as he sees it, is "colossal in degree and unchallenged in kind."

I don't happen to agree with many of the specifics cited by Senator Goldwater and Mr. Gitlin, but they have touched the heart, I believe, of what ails us.

We live in a society of bigness: big city, big university, big corporation, big union, and -- yes -- big government. And, in this bigness, the individual cries out: Things are beyond my control, Things are beyond my influence.

Is this true?

I am concerned about big government and big corporations -- yes, and big unions and big universities, too.

But a shoemaker should stick to his last. And today I shall address my remarks to my own field, that of government.

First, let's put the matter in perspective.

America is a big country, with big problems and bigger opportunities. It cannot afford a little government, a government unequal to its responsibilities.

Second, the federal government is not the ever-expanding, all-enveloping monster that some people think it is. When you read, as I have of "the seemingly inexorable expansion of the federal payroll," it is first worth examining the facts.

In the ten years 1955 to 1965, our population increased 18 per cent and our Gross National Product, in constant dollars, 38 per cent. During that same period, the average number of civilian employees on the Federal payroll increased only 4 per cent.

I don't think you can call that "inexorable expansion." In fact, I think it's pretty exorable -- and, believe it or not, you'll find that word in the dictionary.

The real expansion has not been in the federal government, but in state and local government. In 1955, they employed almost twice as many people as the federal government, and last year over 3 times as many.

State and local government, the units of government closest to the people, are hardly withering on the vine.

Moreover, as a consequence of the Supreme Court's historic one-man one-vote decision -- a decision which I am confident will stand despite all the efforts to undermine it -- we can look forward to a veritable renaissance in state government, and in its vigor, effectiveness, and relevance to today's problems and opportunities.

And I can assure you that we in Washington like it that way. We don't see state and local governments as rivals of the federal government -- we see them as working partners in the service of one boss, the American people.

That's what President Johnson means when he speaks, as he often does, of "creative federalism." And he not only preaches it, he practices it.

Government at every level must be big enough to do its job, and not one bit bigger. And government at every level must be fully responsive to the wishes of the people, and must not infringe upon their essential freedom to exercise their own initiative, and their creative energies and abilities, to the full.

For the real strength of America is not in government -- although governments at all levels have an essential role to play. It is in America's businessmen, its workers, its farmers, its professional people -- yes, and in its scholars and artists too.

It is in its wide array of non-governmental organizations -- its churches, its civic groups, its trade associations and trade unions, its professional societies, its universities, and -- not least -- its political parties.

It is in the spirit of this America, replete with a rich variety of individual thought and action, that we are building the Great Society.

There are those who charge today that the Great Society -- and the legislation enacted to implement it -- represents a great extension of federal activity and power. But this is not the case.

In the first place, the key elements of the Great Society were not plucked out of thin air in Washington. Rather, they are goals for which men and woman of good will -- and organizations of good will -- have been working and fighting for over many years.

They represent, also, the faithful implementation of the Democratic Party platforms of 1960 and 1964, to whose framing many, many public-spirited organizations and individuals contributed.

Furthermore, these Great Society measures are not being implemented by Washington over the heads of the American people.

Take the war on poverty, for example.

It is being waged by a wide variety of local groups throughout the country. And the training camps for the Job Corps aren't being run from Washington -- they're being operated by universities, by corporations, and by other non-governmental agencies.

Take federal aid to education, for another. One of its major objectives is to stimulate experiment, innovation, and improvement in our schools at those points -- nearly all outside Washington -- where significant breakthroughs can be achieved.

We do not seek to impose any particular educational philosophy, but rather to give school boards, superintendents, and teachers the budgetary elbowroom to develop their own initiatives.

The same is true of urban problems. Your federal government has no desire whatsoever to "take over" the cities. The problems vary so much, city by city, that local coordination and initiative are the vital factors. We cannot create local zip and zest in attacking these problems -- but we can back them up wherever they appear.

Above all, the Great Society is not the old-fashioned welfare state, re-distributing from above the limited resources of a static economy. It is the opportunity state, seeking to give every citizen the means to realize his full potentialities, and thus to advance and enliven the community generally.

If you will examine the content of the historic legislation passed by the Congress in 1965, you will find that the laws passed by that Congress aim toward giving maximum initiative for action to the lowest possible unit of government -- beginning with the individual citizen.

Our founding fathers did not establish this republic merely to ensure its citizens life, liberty, and security. They aimed much, much higher -- they declared the rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Even a totalitarian state can offer total security. But only an open society can offer its citizens the freedom to seek self-fulfilment -- and that, I think, is the real meaning of happiness -- in their own way.

I am not complacent, and I do not think we have solved all the problems of bigness. But I do think we are going at it the right way.

Where do you come in?

There is in every American, I think, something of the old Daniel Boone -- who, when he could see the smoke from another chimney, felt himself too crowded and moved further out into the wilderness.

The unprepared man would have perished in that wilderness. But, with the highly developed skills of the pioneer, Daniel Boone knew that he could meet the wilderness on its own terms, master it and mold it to his purposes.

Our present-day world is much more complex -- and in some ways even more perilous -- than the pioneer wilderness.

Our society is indeed a society of big units. It is a society which tests the capacities of those who must make their way in it.

It tests, above all, those men and women who would change society, who would turn men and institutions from rutted patterns, who would start out in new directions.

But if our society is big, it is also open -- open to the energies, the talents, and the aspirations of everyone in it.

To those men and women who enter the open society prepared for it -- as you are being prepared at this great university -- the opportunities are greater than ever before.

To those men and women, the great potential peril is not alienation from their society.

It is, rather, the peril of their alienation from ideals of excellence and of self-commitment.

If there is dissatisfaction with the status quo, good. If there is ferment, so much the better. If there is restlessness, I am pleased.

Then let there be ideas, and hard thought, and hard work.

If man feels small, let man make himself bigger.

Ours is that opportunity. Let us make the most of it.



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