

Remarks

by

THE HONORABLE HUBERT HUMPHREY
Vice President of the United States

to

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

at

Special Gifts Dinner
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MR. SAMUEL D. LEIDESDORF: Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention for a few moments? I have just been informed by the Vice President some urgent business has arisen and that he has to leave for Washington very shortly, and therefore cannot take dinner with us, much to our regret. But I know before he goes he would like to say a few words to you and express to you his thoughts about the American Jewish Committee.

I could stand here and tell you for the next half hour of the many accomplishments of our Vice President, who's devoted his whole life to public service, making America a better place for all of us to live in; but I know you don't want to hear from me because you can hear from me any time. So, therefore, I have the great privilege and the honor to introduce to you the Vice President of the United States. (Applause)

THE HONORABLE HUBERT H. HUMPHREY: My thanks to you, Mr. Leidesdorf, for your gracious introduction and I want to thank you for introducing me to all of your young friends here that we've been having our picture taken with--Judge Proskauer, my young friend Charlie Silver over here, Mr. Kaplan, Jacob Blaustein--many others that I ought to mention.

I'm just simply delighted to have the opportunity to once again with the members of the American Jewish Committee, dear friends, friends that have heard me all too often to even want to contemplate the thought of hearing me again. But when the invitation was extended by Morris Abram to come here to join with you, Morris is so persuasive that I didn't even wait a moment--I just said yes, and then he was stuck with me. I'm sure that he thought that was just a courtesy to the Office of the Vice Presidency, but he found out that I accepted, whatever may have been

his personal wishes.

I believe it was two years ago, was it not, that we were together? And on many other occasions and in many other cities we have been together. I know, of course, of the wonderful work of the American Jewish Committee, particularly your work these past sixty years in the field of human relations, which is the field that's been closest to my heart privately and publicly and which, of course, is the most important endeavor of all of mankind. The ability and the capacity of human beings to live together and work together is, of course, the very essence of civilization, and when an organization dedicates its resources and its manpower, its intelligence and its capacity to finding the causes of hatred and fear and bigotry, as was the case in your studies in prejudice, then you perform a service for everybody, for all humanity, wherever human beings may inhabit this earth.

And I want to take this opportunity as Vice President to thank you for leading the way; for being willing to pioneer when others were not even looking beyond the horizon; for being willing to teach and to educate when others were still entrapped by their own timidity and their own bigotry. You have led the way. And of course I know that, in the recent Ecumenical Council, the great work of the American Jewish Committee and I can look around this room and see many that contributed personally to this, the work of the declaration of the Council on the Jewish people. It was a remarkable achievement and one, may I say, that all of us heralded and one that I think strengthens the bonds of friendship between peoples of all faiths, of all groups, and of all origins.

Looking through this room I hesitate to even mention another name, because there are some here that have been very close to me throughout all my public life. There are persons here who have made it possible for me

to be in public life, and I would be here if for no other reason than to pay my respects and thanks to them. I suppose like most people who have, in a sense, been a sponsor, you sometimes just wonder what you've sponsored! But you have to be tolerant and forgiving and understanding, because that is the whole purpose of the American Jewish Committee! (Laughter) That's one of the reasons that I came to you early in my public career, and I think it's also one of the reasons that you embraced me: you thought that if you could do that, you could maybe even accomplish greater things than that. It was sort of a trial run.

I must return to Washington tonight. As you know, these are very difficult days for our country and we've been having a number of meetings relating to your welfare and to our welfare as individuals and as a nation, and I like to be present for those occasions. I should have returned a little earlier this afternoon, but I had once assured you that I would be present at the dinner, and since I knew that I couldn't do that, the least that I could do was to be present, may I say, for this reception.

May I encourage you in the endeavors which you now have underway. May I remind you that the work in the field of human relations and better relationships between nations and peoples is not completed. We've only made the beginnings. There are still these festering sores of intolerance and hatred in many areas of the world, and those festering sores which ultimately, if not treated, consume the patient and literally destroy everything that we hope to maintain.

I know you want to go to your dinner. I leave you with a note of thanks from the President and myself for the tremendous constructive service to this country that is manifested by the personalities in this room. You all know what you've done for us. Many of you have given so much, in peace and in war. We're going to need you even more in the troubled

and trying days ahead.

There's a note of good news. Your country is stronger than it's ever been, I think it can be said without any doubt richer than it's ever been, and I think it's more just than it's ever been. We've made genuine progress in the fields that truly count. Not only in our bank accounts, not only in our balance of payments, not only in our stock market, but we've made progress in terms of a better life for more and more people. And this nation represents to, I think, all humanity the symbol of hope, that there can be a better day. And when you feel a little bit burdened because of the many duties that we've assumed, and the many sacrifices that are placed upon us, just remember this: that no matter how much we give, no matter how many sacrifices we may think we make, that it can be said unequivocally that the American people have a standard of living that is unsurpassed, and that precept and example is the most powerful force in the world.

We have something to offer the world. We have the example of how to work together as people of many races and creeds, and we have the precept and example of how to build a prosperous and a just society in which more and more people can share. The day of the so-called common man is fast disappearing, because I don't think there are very many common men. They're very uncommon in our country, in the sense that everybody is first class. That's the way you want it and that's the way I want it.

May I commend the Past Presidents that you're going to honor tonight. I know that there are four or five of them--I was checking around here. Isn't Si Lewis one of your past presidents? No? Well, he should have been. (Laughter) You agree with that. I know, I've got a list of them here--I know my friend Jacob Blaustein is, and I'm glad to see him looking so hale and hearty. And I know that Lou Kaplan is--I already mentioned

him. And Herbert ^{EURMANN} ~~Radman~~ is surely one of the distinguished past presidents. And my friend Irving Engel. By the way, some of you have been with me so much today it sounds like we're members of the same family. And as I said, Judge Proskauer, whom we've just been visiting with, is surely one of the honored past presidents. He's the younger fellow, because when I came in Mr. Leidesdorf, Sam Leidesdorf was saying, "Well, I'm 84 years old"--he told me just like that, and the good Judge said, "Now, young man, you just keep quiet." He wasn't talking to me, he was talking to Sam! I want you to know what a joy it is to see this kind of youth, this kind of spirit. I only hope that when I'm 64, the Lord willing, or 68, that I can have the spirit that you have, my dear friend and Judge, the spirit that you have. If I can do that, I'll feel as lucky as Charlie Silver.

Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. LEIDESDORF: Mr. Vice President, I want to thank you for being with us. My only regret is that you can't take dinner with us tonight, but I realize that it's been a sacrifice on your part to even be with us for this short time. You've done a wonderful job for the country. If there were a lot more men like you in the country, it would be a better place to live in. May the good Lord bless you and keep you.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Thank you very, very much. (Applause)

~~can have dinner with us tonight~~

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