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REMARKS OF VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES HUBERT H. HUMPHREY  
BEFORE THE FEDERAL EDITORS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER,  
WASHINGTON, D. C. JUNE 21, 1966

Things happen so quickly these days that one doesn't know when he's on and when he's off. I have just come from a meeting of our National Coal Association, Mr. Macy, that's busily engaged in helping us with our balance of payments problem. The Vice President is a sort of general practitioner with patients that have great courage. They are perfectly willing to suffer his treatment from time to time, so I come to you today not as any expert, but as a friend.

I first want to salute my good friend, and this very distinguished public servant, Chairman Macy, that has I trust by now handed out the fourteen awards, and to Jimmy Harrison, who is, I think, the world's greatest printer, and to Carper Buckley, to the many people who are here from our federal agencies responsible for the publication of so many important documents.

Let me join you, Mr. Macy, in adding congratulations to each and every one of the award winners.

I asked Mr. Conn, who works with me, to gather together from our files some of your publications. I want you to know that I didn't come over here just to look at you without having looked at what you've been doing. And as most salesmen do, you like to show the product, or sometimes if there are any doubting Thomases in the room, why you'll always like to let people know that you have been there.

I took a look at all these publications and I want to say that I'm very much impressed. As a matter of fact, I could have worked my way through college selling these. I sold some that haven't looked half so good. And I regret to tell you some of them are out of business now too.

But in all candor and sincerity these publications and those of you that have published them and have edited these journals, I think represent editorial excellence.

If there is one theme that your President would like to have you commit yourself to, and one theme that underscores the purpose of this administration, it is the theme of excellence: doing better than you had planned on doing.

I've had the privilege, during my public and private life, of doing a good deal of fund raising. I've raised some fun, too, but fund raising. And as I've said to many of the gatherings that I have spoken to, if you are only going to contribute as much, after my speech, as much as you intended to before I arrived, then this speech was really not necessary.

There is another way of putting it: the difference between a person of ability and competence and one that has only mediocre ability is excellence. And the difference between a great Nation and just a Nation is doing the impossible.

Every page of history that's worth reading indicates a record of achieving the impossible. That's what makes good history. And those of you that are responsible for these great federal publications have truly measured up to the standard of excellence of performance.

My college students used to tell me that a good teacher does not have to be dull. I suppose that was a way of telling me to sort of shape up on the lectures, but it is a fact that a good teacher ought to be interesting.

So, too, I think that a publication doesn't prove that it is of considerable merit just because it is unreadable. I believe that a publication can be attractive, of good format, interesting and still be a professional publication, and one in which you can take great pride.

It's sort of like saying that I don't believe that you prove yourself to be a member of the intellectual elite by just being totally careless and carefree.

I think that you can be happy, and still be intelligent.

I don't think you have to be morose to prove to people that you are thoughtful.

Publications can be beautiful and informative or they can be dry as dust, and some are, and they are generally relegated to the dusty shelves--as they should be.

So I urge upon you a continuation of your effort in using imaginatively your space and paper and type and photographs and layout.

Oh, when I think of all the publications that are made available to the American people, that even if they had something in them worth reading, would take a man that had given over his life to penitence to read them.

I want to mention for a moment a word about budgets, because I know that this is a problem that confronts you, but this is not unique to you. Everybody has the same problem. I went over a budget matter with Mrs. Humphrey this weekend. She decided not to travel back to Washington with me after that discussion. But she'll be here tonight.

Budgets are a constant problem in business, families and government, but in government it's a little more difficult because budgets become not a private matter but a public matter, and I know you work on very carefully prepared budgets, and some of them not only prepared, but pared.

There's always a tendency to want to cut down on what we call the information service of the government agencies. You don't have the funds of our great publishing houses in the private sector, nor do you have the funds that are available to our commercial industries for their in-house publications.

Often when you spend somewhat more for an attractive publication, you don't draw praise, you get brickbats. Somebody says "What did you do that for? There is no need of having such a high quality of paper, such a good layout, so many colors."

Oh, I've gone through this. I served on the Appropriations Committee. But let me assure you that I, for one, believe that a Federal publication should be attractive enough to be read.

And I'll give you something very private: it should be attractive enough so you're pleased with it. And if you're pleased with it, at least you've satisfied one customer. And in public life, that's some achievement, I want you to know. But if you're pleased with it, you'd be surprised, other people might be too.

One of the great needs in public life today is to have a sense of personal dedication to a point where dedication means that you are so involved in your work that you are pleased with it and happy with it.

And if that publication is good enough for you to give to your mother or to your sweetheart or to your boyfriend or to your husband or a member of your family or to your best friend, and you'd like to present it and say "I had something to do with it", then I think it's a good publication. Because I don't think you'd just present a bundle of paper that nobody would want to have associated with you. Remember that you go with it. When that publication goes out, your name is on it; like I tell the folks in my office, "Look, if you want to send a letter like that one, you put your name on it. I don't want them to think I'm that stupid."

Yes, ever so often, I get one of these who says "Thanks for your views. Signed, my name."

First of all, I maybe didn't like those views. Why thank them?

Secondly, I don't like that kind of a letter. It indicates right off hand that nobody read it, or if somebody did, it was a nobody that would prepare that kind of an answer. We have a go-around in my office ever so often.

I tell them I make enough mistakes without them helping me, and I'm happy to tell you that the office saves me all the time, so I'm not criticizing my staff. It's just once in a while, like the boss, we get a little sloppy, and when that happens they call me to task and you'd be surprised what I do too.

This is just another way of saying that when this publication goes out, or this one here, "Fish and Shellfish Over the Coals", I want to tell you that I just wanted to go right out on this seashore after reading that. It was really great.

I would suggest that you might have a little more in there about wall-eyed pike. I'm sure that the publisher of this is from the East shore someplace. But it's an attractive publication.

And I would just feel, if I were the person that worked on this one I just picked up, I would be proud to send that to any member of my family--to anybody that I ever went to school with, to my favorite teacher, to my minister, to whoever it is--my stockbroker--and say, "You want to see what I'm doing? Take a look at it." That's the best credential that you can offer anybody.

I didn't have any of that on these notes. I was just figuring that up as we went along here. Each and every one of us wants to be remembered for what we do. We may deny it but we still want to be remembered. I have met very few people with a passion for anonymity over the long run.

And if you want to be remembered for what you do, why not be remembered for something that's good? Because I'll tell you that for the mistakes you make you will be remembered and it's like a sort of balance sheet--the assets and the liabilities, the debits and the credits.

If you want a good balance at the end of your life--public life and private life--you can rest assured that just because you're a human being and active there will be a few of those debits, and you better work on some credits. And you have. That's what I'm here to tell you.

This is like talking to the reformed already, there's no souls to be saved here. You have already done it.

But maybe you can spread the word.

I noticed that AID gets a lot of booting around and I want my friends in AID to know that I think they do a pretty good job. "Happiness is a little AID." Now that's a . . . you know somebody asked me what is happiness? This was about October 1964. I said "a majority in November of 1964." There are always people going around asking

you "What's your definition of happiness?" Or "What's your definition of this?" But happiness is a little aid in the right place at the right time. It's attractive. It isn't very high quality paper but I guess the budgets are pretty tight. But these photos are good.

The old Chinese saying that one picture is worth ten thousand words-- I told the White House photographers one time, I said "If you fellows would put more pictures in the paper of Humphrey you wouldn't have to listen to all these speeches." But that's a very very fine publication.

Let me just give you another definition, "Happiness is an editor who puts out a high-quality publication to an appreciative audience." And an audience is as appreciative as the product that comes to it. Businessman knows that. And happiness is a citizen that reads a Federal publication and understands it, enjoys it, and is encouraged by what his Federal Government is doing.

You'd be surprised the tremendous demand (you're not surprised those of you in the Department of Agriculture) the tremendous demand for the Agriculture Yearbook. I get more request for that than any publication.

As a Senator I never could find enough of them; I did more bartering for those Agriculture Yearbooks than the Federal Government has done the commodity credit program or under public law 480.

I would go to my friend Johnny Pastore of Rhode Island and I'd say, "How many farmers you got up there, John?"

And he got his allotment of those yearbooks, and I'd trade him off something that was pretty good for Rhode Island and then I'd work over all the House members.

One of the advantages of seniority is you do learn the tricks.

Everybody in Minnesota that ever had a kind word for Hubert Humphrey got one of those yearbooks--and a few that were doubtful.

So I give you my definition now of what is happiness.

I look through this natural resource book published by the Department of Interior and I want to say that the Department of Interior puts out some of the most attractive publications. Of course they have a great deal to publicize: the natural beauty of America. But there isn't any commercial publication that can exceed this-- and I believe that one of our -- (applause) That's the editor there.

This pamphlet gets out, the Navy won't have enough room for these young fellows. Well, I can go down the line and pick them out, the Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress, our Federal Aviation Bulletin, our program for the bulletins from Department of Commerce-- I've looked them all over.

I gained a great deal of information out of these bulletins. Somebody asked me, "What do you read?" And I said I'm having trouble keeping up with the government. But I try to read a good deal of what's published by our government and you do the publishing.

Now I'm not going to keep you here too long. The career Federal editor as I have told you occupies an important post. You are our communicators with the public sometimes. But at least with the interest areas, public health publications are of tremendous importance to the medical profession and the healing arts.

Every department--the State Department publications which I have a great demand for, which I did as Senator and now as Vice President. People can't believe that there are that many good publications available.

I want each and every one of you to merchandise your publications. I didn't want to come here just to brag on you.

You all have families and communities that you come from. I have made it my business that wherever my children attend school that they get something there in that school that this Federal Government is doing and publishing in their libraries.

I have had displays of the publications of the different agencies of government in the schools that my children have attended.

They're free; these publications are available and most of the time they get just put away some place after the in-house people have read them.

People enjoy them. There are many of these publications that can be made available.

You have your friends in Congress that can make them available, to a host of people in America, to learn more about their government. This isn't a propaganda effort, this is an educational effort.

And I urge you to make it your business to do a better job for your country, for your government and if I may add, for your administration.

After all, the President of the United States is responsible for all that goes on in this country good or bad--if you don't believe so why go over and listen to what they say about him sometimes.

When I think of what we're doing in America today in education, and in health, and in economic opportunity, and in opening up the doors of opportunity--when I think of what we're trying to do in the environment of America, to improve it, and the cultural life of America--there is a lot to be talked about and a good deal to be written about. And that written word is the one that is remembered.

It's very, very important.

Now with your in-the-house publications, I want you to remember that even the people that work in the agencies that you represent have a lot of competition for their attention.

You're competing with the best.

And if you want what you've written to be read by the people in the agency for which you have some responsibility, you're going to have to compete with the finest commercial publications in America.

There's only so much time in a man's day. There's only so much time he can allocate to reading, and he's going to have to take the choice sometimes--whether it's Life, or Look or Reader's Digest or something else than what you write.

And I think you're just as good as any of them. In fact some of the best writing I've ever seen and ever read has been from the Federal publications and the Federal editors.

So I want to congratulate all of you who are the winners, but I want to congratulate those of you who didn't get into the winner's box this year. You know, I'm the right guy to talk to you.

I've been close to victory and I've had some of it. I've tasted the wine of victory and I've had the crumbs of defeat. And I want to let you in on a secret--the wine of victory is better.

But don't give up if you didn't make it once. First time I ran for office they outcounted me. It was an honest election; I just didn't have enough votes, that's all.

The second time I was elected, and the third time and the fourth time and the fifth time and the sixth time and then all at once I decided I'd go for bigger things. And I received a lesson in public administration and politics--and I didn't do too well. But I learned and then I had a chance to work for the man that did win,

the late President John Kennedy. And I learned a great deal from him. And then I had the opportunity in 1964 to be with a winner and I learned a great deal from him.

You know, you can really profit from adversity and you can also lose from victory--or you can just plain be washed up by adversity--or you can grow with victory. It just depends upon what you want to do with your life.

And I think it's true in every one of our lines of endeavor; there are some times that a little setback destroys us. But most of the time to the people of any substance, it's a challenge.

And when you leave this room today I want you to do one thing; I want you to resolve that you're going to make that publication that you're responsible for a little better. And when you think it's a little better than the one I saw this year, you send it to me. Because, believe it or not, I'll look it over.

I am a sort of a sneaky fellow like that; I will check up on you. I will look it over because I'm proud of you, I'm proud of our government. I talked to a hundred farm leaders this morning and I said, let's speak up for America for a change.

Everybody tells us what a miserable failure we are. Every day I read in the press the mistakes that we make. This is a monument, America, to mistakes. Would that more countries make more mistakes. Then we wouldn't have to offer quite so much help to some others. I just don't think we make that many mistakes. I think that what we're really saying is that we have higher standards than we have been able to attain as yet. And I'm one that believes we ought to have our own standards. And I think that they ought to be very high.

I don't think there is a more noble calling than public service. I think that to be privileged to serve in the Government of the people is the greatest privilege that can be afforded to a man in his life. And that's why I love my work.

I get like you do many times, very discouraged. Sometimes exceedingly tired. Sometimes almost, well, almost cynical but not quite. And then I bounce back because I know that very few people have the opportunity that I have to be a member of a great government, and a great country and to be a spokesman for a great cause--the cause of freedom and social justice. And to also be a participant in what I consider to be a social structure, a society that has finer goals and finer ideals than any society.

I'm not one that believes that Americans are a bunch of materialists. I don't happen to believe that this country is just interested in things. I think that America is interested in beauty. I think it's interested in excellence. I think that it's interested in performance. But above all I think that America is interested in people.

And anybody that's interested in people is interested in next to that which is infinite and divine.

An old preacher friend of mine said not long ago, the way you treat people is the way you treat God. I think he put more religion in that one sentence than anything I've ever heard or read.

And I might add the way you treat your job is the way you treat your country.

You're a public servant. And if it's this America that you talk about, that you love, and this America the beautiful, then you help make it that way. And beauty is not merely the beauty of its buildings but the beauty of the spirit of this land, and the beauty of the understanding of this land, and the enlightenment of its people. And you are educators and communicators. So let's do it well. Thank you very much.

NOTES BY VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT W. HUMPHREY  
BEFORE FEDERAL EDITORS ASSOCIATION LUNCHEON  
Washington, D. C.  
June 21, 1966

14 Award  
memo

Chairman Macy, (Public Printer), Mr. Jimmy Harrison; (Superintendent of Documents), Casper Buckley; Federal Editors:

I want to add my warmest congratulations to the commendations you have received from Chairman Macy. I have been looking over your Award Winning Publications. Truly, they represent editorial excellence. They remind me of something ~~I used to tell my~~ college students *say!*

"A good teacher does not have to be dull."

So, too, a good Federal publication does not have to be dry as dust to be authoritative. It should be exciting and stimulating. It should represent imaginative use of space, paper and type.

I know you work on carefully prepared budgets. You don't have the funds the great publishing and advertising firms of commercial industry have at their disposal. Often, when you spend somewhat more for a very attractive publication, you may draw brickbats instead of bouquets.

Let me assure you that I, for one, believe that a Federal publication should be attractive enough to be read. Indeed, there is nothing more wasteful than to publish something which is not seen, consulted, remembered.

"Happiness is an editor who puts out a high-quality publication to an appreciative audience."

"And happiness is a citizen who reads a Federal publication , understands it, enjoys it and is encouraged by what his Federal government is doing."

I want you to know, too, that I am very proud that our career system of civil service possesses the talent represented in this room and throughout Editor's offices in the Executive Branch.

Too often career civil servants are arbitrarily tagged with the epithet "bureaucrat".

↳ Too rarely is superior performance commended.

↳ Chairman John Macy has sought to remedy this imbalance, and he has done a wonderful job.

↳ The Career Federal Editor occupies an important post. In this Communications Age, the Federal "message", particularly on the printed page, must get through. There is enormous competition for the public's attention. Even your own Agency constituencies -- your "in house"

personnel or professional or technical audiences -- are bombarded with competing media.

The success of the Great Society does hinge to a considerable extent on high employee morale, and you do serve this goal.

It hinges on public understanding of the inescapable issues of our time, and you serve this goal.

↳ And so to the able judges, to the winners and to those who didn't quite make the winners' circle this year -- my renewed congratulations and best wishes.

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