

[AFL-CIO Executive
Council, Press
Conference]

[Transcript]

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY
PRESS CONFERENCE 2/27/67

HUMPHREY: Good morning, good morning. I am sorry I thought maybe some of you were in the other room there when I was visiting with the Council.

REPORTER: We aren't vice presidents.

HUMPHREY: Oh, no, you can do better than that. Well, I discussed with the AFL-CIO Executive Council this morning matters in the field of foreign policies and national security and I discussed in some detail the military, the diplomatic political and economic developments centering around Vietnam. I expressed on behalf of the Administration our thanks for the resolution adopted by the ~~Council~~ Council concerning Vietnam. I believe that it will be most helpful as a expression of united support for the Administration and the government's efforts in Vietnam. I traced for the Council what I consider to be the diplomatic initiatives that have been taken and why they have not thus far been successful and I pointed out that the course that we are following and will continue to follow -- namely one of perseverance, with staying with what we're doing, of constantly probing for an opportunity for honorable negotiation, yet at the same time maintaining military pressure -- that this course to my way of thinking is the best way to get peace. I have a view, a feeling that Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Cong know that they can't win this struggle in Vietnam but they are hopeful that they can win it be arousing a world public opinion against us and of dividing America -- or to put it simply, they can't win it in Vietnam

they can't win their struggle in Vietnam so they hope to win it in Washington, that hope will not be realized because we have set our course, we are going to maintain a posture of being firm and resolute without being either belligerent or aggressive. We are going to be persevering and patient without any sign of weakness or of doubt or hesitation. I also mentioned to the Council what I consider to be the other developments in the struggle in Southeast Asia, that there are great things happening, that the coming back into the family of nations by Indonesia is a singularly important development, that Indonesia's purge of the communist forces is a very important development and that this would not have happened and could not have happened without the presence of American and allied forces in Southeast Asia. The achievements in Indonesia belong to the Indonesians but the non-communist leaders of Indonesia are well aware of the psychological importance of the presence of the United States in Southeast Asia. I mentioned that in these countries of Asia where ^{they are} ~~there is~~ close to the struggle that governments that support resistance of the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong, that is governments that resist aggression are not suffering political defeats, to the contrary they are gaining great political victories. Prime Minister Holt of Australia had the biggest political victory in the history of his party and he waged his campaign on active, open affiliation with the United States in Vietnam. Prime Minister Holyoke of New Zealand likewise openly espoused the cause of New

Zealand's assistance to South Vietnam and working with the United States and won a great victory -- a smashing victory. The Prime Minister of Japan whose party is under severe attack for many domestic matters was called by his opposition a partner of the United States in Vietnam and he won a very spectacular victory. That's just another way of saying that those who are close to the source of trouble and take their stand and have associated themselves with our policies are not being defeated but to the contrary are being reelected and those who are a long way away from the trouble, who have never visited South Vietnam seem to be the most articulate critics. I ~~concluded~~ concluded my visit with the Executive Council this morning by reviewing very quickly and in broad terms the domestic policies of the Administration. Those had been discussed in some length before by others so I felt there was no need of reviewing them in detail but I did note that we are looking forward to the day when we can cut back on our military expenditures. We are planning for the day when there will be peace in Southeast Asia and that the President has a special task force that has been established for what we call post-Vietnam, a task force that looks at what kind of fiscal policy we will ~~put~~ pursue, what tax adjustments, what kind of public works such as the work on our cities, slum clearance and particularly what will we be doing with people in terms of job training, education and the expansion of the war on poverty. We feel that we need to do this preliminary planning because we remember what happened

after Korea. When the peace came in Korea a general apathy set in over this country and social problems went unmet and the government was unresponsive to the great needs of our country and I called upon the AFL-CIO this morning to bend their efforts towards thinking ahead, thinking ahead to the next decade == what kind of America do we want? What will we do with these fabulous resources that we have? How can we direct them to highly constructive purposes and I'm happy to say that the research division department of the AFL-CIO is busily engaged in this kind of thinking. I've been ^{meeting} ~~meeting~~ for the past few months with a number of other groups urging them to do the same thing. Times change and time runs fast and we need to be thinking at least 5 to 10 years into the future. All right.

REPORTER: Mr. Vice President, did you discuss in any way the 1968 Democratic ticket?

HUMPHREY: I did not. I. . .

REPORTER: Did they?

HUMPHREY: No, sir, they did not. I ~~did~~ concentrated this morning my attention on the international developments and I said, I think my opening sentence was that the prime concern of the American nation since World War II has been organizing the peace and I traced what I thought were the difficulties and complexities that we have encountered in our effort to help build a better and peaceful world and reviewed the world scene. I asked them to bear with me as we made a sort of rapid journey

around this globe. I am a member of the National Security Council. I ~~had~~ have been privileged to sit in with the President and his advisors on the major decisions of national security and I thought that this time I could best use my time and at the same time be of help to the members of the Executive Council by discussing matters of national security and foreign policy.

REPORTER: Mr. Vice President, American war planes are now dropping mines into North Vietnamese rivers and American war ships are now firing at North Vietnamese targets. Does this in your view represent an escalation of the war on our part?

HUMPHREY: Well it represents a military decision that has been taken which we hope will be helpful in slowing down infiltration of men and supplies and hopefully to bring North Vietnam to the peace table.

REPORTER: Well, North Vietnam has suggested that this is an escalation -- the word they used -- and they have implied that this might serve to the detriment of bringing them to the conference table. What is your thought on that?

HUMPHREY: Well, I would expect they would say that. As a matter of fact, I think you can expect North Vietnam to complain/about any successful efforts that we make quite vigorously but I wouldn't let my thinking be governed by what came out of Hanoi.

REPORTER: Are these efforts designed to pressure Hanoi to come to the conference table? Do they have that purpose?

HUMPHREY: They are military decisions that are taken for the purpose of advancement of our ~~case~~ cause in South Vietnam, for the protection of our troops, for bringing the price of this struggle to the people, to the government of North Vietnam as a way and a means of helping the allies in the South obtain their objective of stopping aggression.

REPORTER: Mr. Vice President, would you use the word escalation, sir?

HUMPHREY: I've answered your question.

REPORTER: Mr. Vice President, you mentioned that you explained to the Council the diplomatic initiatives ~~and~~ that have been taken and why they haven't been successful. Could you develop that a little further for us?

HUMPHREY: Yes. I pointed out, for example, that from 1963 to 1965, well let me just back up here a minute. I said let's take a look at some of the arguments that are being made. One of the arguments that is being made today that if you will stop the bombing you will get peace talks. I said let's examine that. From 1963 to 1965 there was no bombing of the North and yet during that very same period the North Vietnamese infiltrated very large ~~number~~ numbers of North Vietnamese regular troops and supplies into South Vietnam -- supplied the Viet Cong and organized a command structure for the Viet Cong that heads out of Hanoi, that the period of no bombing of North Vietnam didn't bring peace. In fact, it almost brought the total destruction of South Vietnam.

Then I pointed out that in 1965 we did pause for five days and there was no effort on the part of North Vietnam to talk. In 1966 we paused for 37 days and I traced what was the request then of certain governments for that pause. For example, there were contacts made in Washington and elsewhere with representatives of our government saying that if we would pause for 14 days that North Vietnam would come to the conference table. Then the request was made to extend it another six days because it appeared that things were getting better. Then the request was made to extend it another seven days. Every request was granted. We granted requests up to 37 days and never received a single bid from North Vietnam or Hanoi for talks. I mentioned the most recent talks which I was somewhat privy. The talks in London between Prime Minister and Chairman Kosygin of the Soviet Union and I pointed out that an effort had been made by those two men to bring Hanoi to the conference table, that an effort had been made on the part of the Prime Minister and the Chairman to get the ~~the~~ ~~the~~ United States to make an offer or to comply with their request which we did and then these same two men -- Mr. Wilson and Mr. Kosygin -- attempted to contact Hanoi which apparently they did and received no answer, no response, and I think that it was in the communique that Mr. Wilson said that our efforts, that their efforts had received no response from Hanoi and he said rather, well, I thought, ~~paradox~~ pathetically, because he

he wants ~~so~~ so much to help bring peace, that just one little act on the part of one of the parties might have brought about discussions. That one party was Hanoi. It did not take that ~~step~~ step. It did not take that action. Then I reminded the Council of Ho Chi Minh's response to Pope Paul's letter which was merely a reiteration of his previous position that we would have to have a permanent cessation of the bombing and withdraw. Now, Hanoi has not shown any particular previous position to confer ~~or~~ or to negotiate so the answer that we give is to maintain the same diligence in the diplomatic circles as Mr. Goldberg, Ambassador Goldberg, has said so very properly to search every possible way we can for honorable negotiations but at the same time to pursue relentlessly and calmly and perseveringly the military, political and economic course on which we are presently set. I then reviewed for the Council, sir, what I considered to be the important political developments because this struggle is is political as well as military. I said the struggle is being waged on four fronts -- military, economic, political, diplomatic. Militarily we are succeeding. Economically we are making progress. When I say we, I mean the South Vietnamese and her allies with generous American help. We still have much to do in the areas of pacification. This is a very slow process but our military effort is designed to implement pacification. It's no longer just search and destroy. It is search, attack and hold. The military position has changed considerably and large areas are being liberated from the Viet Cong.

I pointed out that it is not relevant to compare American military action in Vietnam with the French as many people say. They say the French couldn't do it what makes you think you can win? The answer is the French had no more troops than all of Indochina than we presently have in South Vietnam and that all of Indochina included Laos, Cambodia, North Vietnam, South Vietnam. Furthermore, the French were colonialists -- colonial power, trying to reestablish French power. Thirdly, the French had little or no mobility. They were brave soldiers, good soldiers. Fourthly, the French never did really attack the strongholds of the Viet Cong. We are doing that now in the recent operations going back into the highlands, into the mountains, into the jungles. I mentioned just one or two facts that would have been of interest to you. That we have more helicopters today in South Vietnam than all the free world has put together outside of the United States. We have more actual, more operating helicopters -- that is more helicopters in operation in South Vietnam today -- than all the Sino-Soviet bloc put together, than all it has put together. That we have mobility, we have fire power and we have allies and we are not a colonial power but then I went on to point out that this struggle cannot be won military alone, it must be won politically and economically and that means nation building, it means political institutions to be constructed and I traced the elections, two years ago of the ~~the~~ village and district elections which were a success. Seventy percent of the ~~eligible~~ eligible voted and

there were free elections. The constituent assembly of last fall, and I jokingly said yet gentlemen with great ~~in~~ truth, that over 400 reporters from free countries ~~wh~~ went to cover that election and actually they found they had more to cover in San Francisco, Minneapolis and New York in terms of election irregularities than they found in Viet Nam. They had a very, that's just a question, I mean a statement for dramatic emphasis. The election went off ~~well~~ well. Over 80 percent of the eligible electorate cast that vote. Not that constituent assembly will promulgate its constitution very ^{appears} shortly and it/~~appears~~ that it will be a document that is well ~~des~~ designed for representative government. In March of this year will be district and village elections again. In the summer will be the~~re~~ national elections and when the government that is elected -- a truly representative government -- comes into power in South Vietnam, I think it will mark the turning point of the struggle. I think that will be the political decision that is needed to see some light at the end of this long tunnel, struggle in Vietnam. It is my personal view, and I only give you my personal~~x~~ view, I am not speaking for the State Department or Defense or anybody else, it is my own personal view as one who has been deeply interested in the political developments in Southeast Asia, I am not a militarist, that the ~~elections~~ elections, if they can be carried out and I think they will be, will be a very significant factor in bringing about deescalation and hopefully negotiations towards a peaceful settlement. Now I say that, because as

you all know the Viet Cong, while it is communist-led and communist-dominated out of North Vietnam, communist-managed, is not all communist. The Viet Cong have many people within it that are passionate nationalists and I have a feeling that there can be defection, I say can be, I hope so, from the Viet Cong. The rate of defection is up already so it's my view that the political developments this summer will be highly significant.

REPORTER: Mr. Vice President, did you discuss with the Council at all the role and the work of organized labor in the international field?

HUMPHREY: Not this time. I think I should say that I have done that as you know in meetings in Washington and have done so with many of the internationals themselves. I would say here that there is no doubt in my mind that the activities of the free labor movement of this country in building free trade unions, and they have been helpful, by the way, in South Vietnam, as they have in all of Latin America, Africa, and other parts, that this activity is of great significance. This is what I mean as a part of the political development -- the nation ~~building~~ building that must take place. It's one thing for us to win this struggle militarily; it's another thing for us to win it politically. And Vietnam the political struggle is most difficult.

REPORTER: Mr. Vice President, there have been some indications that some unions in

international affairs are receiving money from the CIA. I was wondering if you discussed this with the Council or, if not, what your view is on that and whether you think that is a proper use of such money and whether you are aware of any such money being used in that way?

HUMPHREY: Well, frankly, I have no information that could give be ^{incontrovertible} ~~irrefutable~~ evidence one way or another. I've heard reports and read what some of you men have written but I have not been privvy to these matters and as you know the entire CIA operation is now under complete review. I'll only say by a high level Presidential task force or commission, I'll only say this, & 1) you ~~kn~~ need a CIA in the kind of a world in which we live; 2) the CIA has done nothing but to follow a policy established by higher authorities throughout the years. In other words, & it is an action agency carrying out policy that has been designed at higher levels. Thirdly, our government ought to have ways and means of being able to forward our national interests and to help build democratic societies in these troubled areas of the world. How this is to be done is a matter that is under careful examination right now but I think that the CIA has been criticized far too much and much of it unjustly. I might add that it has in the main served the national interest very, very well. We have had to learn a great deal. We are not exactly the oldest hands at some of this.

But by and large I think that it deserves credit, a pat on the back, rather than some other treatment.

REPORTER: How do you feel about the use of CIA money and support to international activities of American trade unions? Do you feel that is a proper channel for that money?

HUMPHREY: Well, I don't think I ought to answer an "iffy" question like that. ~~X XXXXX~~
~~XXXXX~~ I'm not in a position to make those decisions and I think ^{those} ~~these~~ are the ~~a~~ kind of questions that need to be put to the task force that is looking into these matters. I'll only say this that our labor movement has been mighty generous with its own resources and I want to underscore this, ~~has been mighty generous with its own resources and I want to underscore that, this I know, has been mighty generous with its own resources~~ in doing international nation building, the building of democratic institutions, and helping to construct and helping to create free trade unions, helping in housing, medical programs, a host of programs, the building of the cooperative movement abroad, and much of this has been done out of trade union funds and, of course, in cooperation with our foreign aid administration. I have a feeling that much of what the trade union movement is doing, sir, is with the cooperation of the AID administration.

REPORTER: Mr. Humphrey, was there any discussion of holding the line on wages?

HUMPHREY: Not with me, sir. I gather that there have been others here who talked about these matters and I said I concentrated my attention pretty much on the national security aspects, foreign policy, national security with very brief comment on thanks to the Council with reference to support of poverty program and the efforts that we make in post-Vietnam in terms of fiscal policy and governmental policy relating to our war on poverty, to our programs of eliminating slums, of upgrading the quality of life for our people.

REPORTER: Did you talk to the Council about the proposed merger of labor and commerce?

HUMPHREY: I did not. They didn't ask me.

REPORTER: Mr. Vice President, is this task force studying peace talks. . .

HUMPHREY: I'm not sure. Do you mean is it the same as the peace study?

REPORTER: Yes.

HUMPHREY: Yes. It is integrated in with the. . .

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