

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY

WMAR-TV, Baltimore Maryland

October 20, 1967

This is the seal which identifies the Vice President of the United States. Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey is in Baltimore today to discuss matters of public importance with representatives of the television industry. Here to ask the questions are Robert Mathews, News Director for WBAL-TV, David V. Stickle, News Director for WMAR-TV, and Jerry Turner, News Reporter for WJZ-TV. Mr. Turner has the first question:

MODERATOR: Mr. Humphrey, I believe that Dave Turner has the first question.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, today we are seeing more anti-war protests, and the biggest one, I believe, is supposed to take place tomorrow in Washington. Additionally, there are those in the United States Congress who oppose the war. But it continues. What I would like to know is what criteria does the Administration use in evaluating public opinion?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't think that's really the important question -- I say this most respectfully. I think what's most important is what the Administration feels is in the national

interest -- in the interest of national security.

Had we judged our foreign policy on the basis of public opinion from time to time, I am afraid we really wouldn't have gotten started as a nation because George Washington wasn't very popular at Valley Forge. In fact, he couldn't even get the Continental Congress to send him food.

James Madison, as President of the United States, had open secession on his hands from many New England states over the War of 1812. Abraham Lincoln had more trouble than that.

Woodrow Wilson saw his country almost collapse under this leadership when he sought to promote the League of Nations. Franklin Roosevelt was able to extend the draft a few months before Pearl Harbor by a vote of 203 to 204 -- and there was some arm-twisting to get that extra vote.

I saw a public opinion poll just the other day that was sent to me by a friend. It was dated January 20, 1951, Princeton, New Jersey -- a George Gallup Poll. The two questions were: should we pull our troops out of Korea? . . . or should we stay and fight?

Sixty-six per cent said to pull out. That was a change from the previous August when 80 per cent of the people in that same poll thought we ought to stay in Korea.

If you judge the policy on the basis of the ups and downs of public opinion, you may not have any policy. The duty of a man who is President of the United States is to try to do what is right as he sees it -- to consult, to seek advice, to take a stand. And we've had to do that.

I find this present period very comparable to the period of 1947-1948. I went through that period in politics. I remember the Progressive Party movement of 1948, headed by Henry Wallace. I remember the Dixiecrat Party, headed by Mr. Strom Thurmond, and I remember that Harry Truman's popularity was just about as low as you could get. But I also remember something else, he went on to win.

QUESTION: There is a corollary to Mr. Turner's question. Do you think that these anti-Vietnam rallies are indicative of the growing resentment for our role in Vietnam?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think that among some people, yes.

I think they are highly organized -- well organized. In fact, what is happening now in the month of October was planned last summer. As one member of the government I had knowledge of all the plans. They were intercepted by a gentleman I knew who went to one of those training courses that they have, the training....

QUESTION: When you say "they", Mr. Vice President, subversive groups plan these?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't say they are subversive. I say they are people who very much oppose our policy. There are Communists in this group, but they are very few.

There are many people in these dissenting groups who are fine citizens. My goodness -- without selecting out any names -- there are a number of people who are respected American citizens. I think they are wrong.

For example, Charles Lindbergh was the leader of the "America First" movement. He made a speech in my city in 1940. There were 35,000 people present. He is a fine American. Chester Bowles was there too, and he was part of the "America First" movement at that time. He is a wonderful American. There were many people. The two Senators from my state in 1940 opposed America's lend-lease. They were fine citizens. I think they were misguided. I think they were...well let's put it this way: I don't think they had all the information they needed.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, I would like to pursue that just a bit further and get your personal reaction to this demonstration that

is planned for tomorrow in Washington. We have called out troops to protect the Pentagon, and so forth. Is it your feeling that these massive demonstrations do no good at all and what can you tell from them?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't know what will be the reaction to these demonstrations. It's hard for a man to say they'll do no good, depending on what you think is good. As far as I'm concerned, they'll do no good. They are not going to change my view. Not at all.

We are following a course of action that was subscribed to by President Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy when he was President, and has been continued by President Lyndon Johnson. I can't believe that Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson have been all wrong. I believe that they know what they are doing.

In this demonstration -- there will be many, many people who are pacifists -- people of religious convictions. For example, I have great respect for the Quakers. I have high regard for a man who is a sincere conscientious objector on religious grounds.

There will be those who are just angry about the war -- who don't think we ought to be there. There have been people like

this through all our history. There has never been a really popular war, and I hope there will never be. I don't think we ought to have popular wars.

QUESTION: Under wars, sir, How far do you think we are from peace in Vietnam?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We are just as far from peace as Hanoi keeps us from peace.

The one man in this country who wants peace more than any other man I know is the President of the United States. Put yourself in his position for a moment and order sons into battle knowing, that some of those men aren't going to come back. There is no President that has ever wanted to do that.

President Johnson would do anything within his power to get an honorable peace, and by that all we mean is that South Vietnam should be left alone.

You ask how far we are away from peace. The roadblock to peace is not in Washington; it's surely not in my heart and I'm on the National Security Council.

I was known in the Congress as a man who sought peace, and I haven't changed a bit. I believe in disarmament. I promoted it. I believe in a Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. I was one of its authors.

I was the author of the Peace Corps, the Food for Peace program. These are the programs that I believe in, but I also believe in national security. I don't think peace comes by appeasement, and I don't think it comes by running away from reality anymore than you can build a nice city here in Baltimore by allowing lawlessness and disorder on the streets.

You don't prove yourself to be weak by trying to protect your neighborhood from the criminal element or hooligans. You prove yourself to be a decent and wholesome, good man.

We have no ambitions in South Vietnam. We are not, by the way, in South Vietnam only because of South Vietnam. We are there because we think it is in our national interest.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, if the Vietnam war should be stopped right now, and all of our troops pulled back, isn't it true that it would present a rather damaging blow to our economy here in the United States?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I doubt that. As a matter of fact, if I might add, I think that if we should have a cessation of the hostilities we would find plenty of ways to use the great resources that would have been released in the United States.

There is a tremendous need for housing, for schools, for community facilities, for hospitals, for urban renewal, for education.

I do think that it does take some planning, and one thing I would like to emphasize is what you are doing here in Baltimore. I just left a luncheon held by your Greater Baltimore Committee. I want to compliment that Committee because it's a fine community action group. It isn't just the Establishment on top. It represents a community that is integrating its forces.

By the way, gentlemen, I think that the Baltimore story ought to be told. I think you have done something here that the nation needs to know about -- not only about how you planned the development of your Charles Center, or how you planned the development of a downtown urban renewal, but how you are going out into the disadvantaged neighborhood, and about your thinking on education and low and middle income housing and jobs and training.

You have your top business people thinking and planning and working this way along with the militant action groups in your community.

Tell that story -- because Baltimore's size permits it to serve as an example for many cities across America. This is not New York or Los Angeles that are so big and so different. This city can set an example for Minneapolis, Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Cleveland and for many, many cities.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, the head of our anti-poverty program in Baltimore said this morning, after you inspected one of his places, that he was going to ask you for more money for the emergency services. Did he?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: He sure did. And I told him I surely would try to be helpful. I went to your Emergency Services Center and I want to say that I think it's one of the finest community action projects I have seen. It's been a great help to a number of people and the amount of money needed there to sustain it until your city can take it over as a continuing program, I think I was told, is around \$10,500.00. Now, if we can't find \$10,500.00 out of a \$145 billion budget, there is something wrong. I plan on enlisting in that cause.

QUESTION: That brings up the matter of the budget. The House passed a bill the other day which in essence limits the federal spending for 1968 to the level reached in '67 with the exception of the defense spending. Now if this measure happens to get through the Senate -- and I am sure there will be a fight -- isn't there a grave danger of a great many of the programs such as this being cut out or curtailed? I refer to such things as the Model Cities program, Teachers Corps, rent subsidies, and all the like. So what is the Administration looking toward in this area?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If that action stands as it is, sir, you are right. The poverty program will be reduced below the fiscal '67 levels. Your education program will be reduced. There will be little or no money for your Model Cities program.

I talked to Senator Brewster on the way over here. He is very active, as you know, in the Senate; he told me that he doubted that the Senate would agree with those very heavy cuts.

Now there have to be some adjustments in our budget, but I want to be very candid with you. I think those adjustments should be made in things rather than people.

We can hold back on a new dam or a new project of bricks and mortar, but we cannot hold back on the education of our children. And we ought not to hold back on those programs that provide for human renewal -- getting people off welfare and helping them to become productive citizens.

I want to emphasize again that in most cities I go to -- or in many, I guess I should put it that way -- I find that business communities speak of the community action programs as "those programs" and not "theirs". Here I saw the top business leadership of Baltimore speaking of the community action programs as "our" programs, and I can just say to the people of this city that that's a wonderful thing. Instead of the top leadership of this city -- that is, the business and government leadership -- planning for the poor and asking the

needy and the poor to concur, you are bringing them in to participate in the planning. You are making participants out of people rather than supplicants. That's the way to do it.

That's the great thing that I discovered here in the few hours I have been in your city, and it was evident from the moment I arrived.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, I would like to take a moment to get back to Vietnam. What is your assessment of the impact of the Vietnam war on the election chances of President Johnson and yourself in 1968?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I suppose, in all honesty, that I really couldn't give you a factual answer. I can give you a surmise as I see it.

I doubt that the American people will turn away from the President who has given leadership of restraint and prudence -- the two words that characterizes what President Johnson has tried to do.

I'll put it this way: Any President, without any judgement, can get this country into a world war overnight. But to apply power in such a manner that it does not trigger a major confrontation and conflagration -- that it does not trigger a nuclear war -- that's statesmanship.

Now I believe that President Johnson has sought to fulfill the commitment that we made years ago for the defense -- and I underscore the word defense -- of free nations. We want to destroy no one. We're set to bring to bear only that amount of power which is required for our objectives -- to repel the aggression, to promote self-determination, to fight social misery and find an honorable peace. Now these are our objectives. We're ready to go to the peace table today. We're ready to go to the peace table today with a cease fire, and we're ready to go just to talk about a cease-fire. We're ready to talk without any conditions at all.

And let me say this to those who are so deeply concerned about peace: The people we need to talk peace to are not our neighbors in the United States, they are the people that we can't get to the conference table from Hanoi. They are from the Vietcong; they don't want to talk peace.

And I think that sometimes they're a bit encouraged by what they see in America -- division, dissension and disunity -- there is not as much as they think there is, but it is very loud and articulate and visible. You see Ho Chi Minh won his first struggle not in Indo-China but in Paris, and he thinks he's going to win this one in Washington. He's not.

Let me tell you, there is some good news. There's plenty of it. Less than two years ago South Vietnam was a cripple. It had less than 30 battalions of troops, and they were not even battle-worthy, much less really competent in the field. The country was about to be cut in two.

Less than 45 per cent of the population had any government control at all. Today that's changed considerably. Approximately 65 to 70 per cent of the population is under government allegiance or control. The main arteries of commerce today are controlled by the allies and the armed forces of the allies. The rate of defection in the Vietcong has doubled this past year. The rate of desertions in the army of Vietnam is way down.

That army, which wasn't doing a very good job of fighting a few months ago, is now a much better army. There is considerable room for improvement -- don't misunderstand me -- but many of its units are battling furiously and with great courage.

The best thing that's happened -- and I just want you to keep this in mind -- is that they have been developing constitutional government. You remember less than two years ago, when they said they'd have a Constituent Assembly that would write a constitution. Many Americans said they would never do it. But they did.

They had an election in September, 1966, for a Constituent Assembly, a free election. That assembly had a job to do in six months -- to write a constitution. And they did it. The critics said that they wouldn't do it; and some critics said that if they did do it that the military directorate wouldn't accept it. But the directorate did.

And then the Assembly adapted election laws and elections were held -- district elections, hamlet elections, a presidential election, senatorial elections. There were almost 500 candidates for 60 seats in the new Senate of the Vietnamese government. There are 1800 candidates for the election this coming week for approximately 480 seats in the House of Representatives.

Now gentlemen let's take a look at ourselves. I want you to read our American history. George Washington could hardly keep men in the field. One third of our total population were Tories and went to Canada. The rest of them were split between neutralists and those for the revolution.

When it came to a Constitution, we never elected a Constituent Assembly. Delegates were appointed by governors and the legislatures. One hundred men were invited to go to Philadelphia in May, 1789. Fifty-five finally came -- most

of them a week or two late. There wasn't even a quorum when the Convention was supposed to meet. That's the early history of the Constitution of the United States.

Moreover, not a single reporter -- if you'll permit me -- was permitted to attend. There was no commentary, and even poor Benjamin Franklin had two of the younger members assigned to watch him because when he had a glass of wine he was prone to talk a little bit. That was written in secret, that Constitution of ours.

Our capital moved eleven times from 1776 to 1790; when we finally won our independence -- at Yorktown, the Navy that bottled up the English fleet was a French navy sent by that great democrat Louis XVI, the King of France, who subsequently was guillotined. And the main forces at the Battle of Yorktown were French, not American. When you go to the Yorktown memorial, take a look at the tablets. The casualties -- most of them -- were French. So when you hear today that the Americans are sacrificing, as we are -- great sacrifices -- remember that we got a loan, foreign aid from the French and didn't pay back right away.

And the amount of enthusiasm for the war varied with the victories, as always. (Laughter)...I used to teach history.

QUESTION: President Johnson said today that he will not visit the Governor's Conference. Was this decision made because of possible embarrassment of the President in light of the recent misplaced cable incident?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: (laughter) No. No, he hasn't intended to visit the Governor's Conference. As a matter of fact, he asked me the other evening if I had been invited to go and I said, no, I had not -- that I had no intention of going. Nor has he had any plans to go to the Governor's Conference.

QUESTION: The cable notwithstanding, I think it's pretty generally agreed that President Johnson would like an affirmative vote on his policy in Vietnam. If that doesn't come out of the Governors' Conference, do you think it would likely affect the policy any, or the President's popularity any?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think the majority of the governors feel very strongly about our policy in Vietnam and strongly support it. They've been at the White House time after time, and I can't imagine they'd change in the last couple of months. We've had several White House conferences with governors, and almost without exception I would

say that at least three-fourths of the governors -- and I think many more (that's a conservative estimate) have openly supported the President. You take Governor Nelson Rockefeller, who has given splendid support to the President, Governor Rhodes of Ohio -- strong support of the President. These are Republican governors. Governor Love of Colorado -- strong support for the President. Governor Knowles of Wisconsin -- strong support for the President's policy. Actually we've had splendid cooperation from the governors.

Now I can understand that Republican governors may not now want, in the year that's coming up -- an election year -- to deny their candidate a chance to do a little picking away at our policy. This is understandable.

Let me pay tribute to the governors. I think they've been very helpful to the President. They put their country above their partisan interests.

QUESTION: Well, Mr. Vice President, while you were traveling through Baltimore this morning the latest report is that the governors did not pass a resolution that was expected. I would like to move on quickly to another matter.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You know that doesn't bother us at all because they do not operate or run our foreign policy. Vietnam is obviously the central concern of the American people; and I think it should be, because it involves our national prestige, our honor, our power, our position in the world. I couldn't help but feel in some of the earlier questions the concern which you men obviously demonstrate -- if not your own concern, the public's concern.

But I often ask myself, what kind of world would it have been today if Harry Truman hadn't told Joe Stalin to get out of Iran and get out quick, or he would send the American forces in? That was in 1945. What kind of a world would it have been if he hadn't taken a stand in Greece and Turkey? -- he faced a lot of resistance, by the way. What kind of a world would it have been if he had not been willing to take the risk of the Berlin airlift?

Why did we defend Berlin, gentlemen? Because we were afraid that if Berlin went down the drain and we didn't keep our pledge to it, the tide of communism would move over Europe and our pledge and our word would be nothing.

What kind of a world do you think it would have been if Harry Truman hadn't taken a stand in Korea? What kind of a world do you think it would have been had John Kennedy let Khrushchev leave those missiles in Cuba?

We've had to take some big chances. Sometimes it's been costly. Other times, fortunately, it has not. But one lesson we've learned: If you take a strong stand and if you don't retreat -- if you stand your ground -- the aggressor has respect for you. And that's the way you gain the peace, not by running. Neville Chamberlain taught us the lesson of appeasement.

QUESTION: I want to talk about the anti-riot bill. It started off with a lot of hoopla and now it's been bogged down. It seems that organized labor said they don't want it because it might curtail their right to strike. What is the status of this bill now and what are its chances?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think you described its status pretty well.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, we've all been amused by your imitation of the Senate minority leader, Senator Dirksen. Would you?...

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, let me tell you. Sometimes when I speak I refer to "the Johnson-Humphrey Administration" you know, and I then tell them why -- because Vice President's are generally not cut in that much. Well one day I was presiding in the United States

Senate, and there was a series of attacks being made upon our President from the Republican side of the aisle. A few Democrats were pitching in, too. At this point, the distinguished minority leader, a gentleman I thoroughly enjoy, got up. He said, "Gentlemen, I don't think we ought to load all the burdens upon the overburdened shoulders of the President. Let's include Hubert in on it too." It became the Johnson-Humphrey Administration on that day, for which I am ever grateful.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you gentlemen, thank you.

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