

This speech was cancelled when President Lyndon Johnson, who probably was invited to speak originally, announced that he would be addressing the convention. It appears that Humphrey was to speak only if the President was not able to attend.

Rosemary Palmer
June, 1984

*Not
Delivered*

REMARKS

VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY

AFL-CIO 7th ANNUAL CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

BAL HARBOUR, FLORIDA

DECEMBER 13, 1967

What we Americans must decide in 1968 is this:

Are we prepared to press on toward the two basic necessities of our time -- national security and national development -- both at home and abroad... or do we intend to turn back from those responsibilities?

Does this rich country want to wipe out the shame of poverty, now that we can afford to -- or not?

Do we want the best education for every American child, now that it is within our grasp -- or not?

Do we want the 70 per cent of our people who live in cities to have a clean, safe, rewarding environment, now that we know the cost of urban blight -- or not?

Do we have the patience and the courage to use our power abroad with restraint, our wealth with compassion...when we know the price of doing otherwise -- or not?

I know where you stand on those historic issues.

Human dignity...human welfare...enhancing the economic and moral strength of America -- that is what the American labor movement is all about.

Your negotiating committees, your executive boards, your business agents and shop stewards, your national leadership, your dedicated rank and file have always been standard-bearers of American democracy at its best.

But let me tell you that the progress-as-usual to which we have all become accustomed in the 1960's, under the leadership of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson,

is now threatened.

Progress-as-usual meant that we passed a Model Cities program, even though 80 per cent of the Republicans in Congress voted against it.

It meant that we passed a rent supplement program even though 93 per cent of the Republicans voted against it.

It meant that we passed a breakthrough program of federal aid to elementary and secondary education, even though the Republican party voted 86 per cent against it.

It meant other victories -- the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Medicare, the greatest advance is the minimum wage since the Fair Labor Standards Act was passed.

It meant escalation of the War on Poverty, ... escalation of the war on urban blight... escalation of the American dream, from full and equal opportunity for most to full and equal

opportunity for all.

Then came the elections of 1966.

We knew that our effective working majority in Congress had been cut. That has happened to almost every President in an off-year election. But many of us did not realize how serious the implications of that cut would be.

Today we see a Coalition of Retreat in Congress -- and they are not all Republicans -- trying to rescind the progress of the 1960's by slow strangulation in the appropriations process.

The President's Model Cities request was cut in half. His rent supplements request was reduced by three-quarters.

The Office of Economic Opportunity, which has brought new hope to so many millions of deprived Americans in the last three years, struggles from one continuing resolution

to the next while the Coalition of Retreat tries to decide whether to fund it at all.

True, Congress has passed over 40 major Administration proposals, excluding appropriation bills, during this session.

President Johnson last week signed the thirtieth and thirty-first health bills passed during his four years as President.

But there are a Safe Streets and Crime Control measure, a Fire Arms Control bill, a Truth-in-Lending measure, civil rights legislation, and a critically important tax bill that need help.

Let me predict right now that the American people are going to repudiate that Coalition of Retreat in 1968.

You have all seen those polls showing that now, as at the height of last summer's riots, a majority of the American people support massive programs to rebuild slums and larger

public programs to meet the problem of hard-core unemployment. My mail shows the same willingness to consider constructive solutions.

The War on Poverty authorization was passed this year because it found strong bi-partisan public support.

Twenty-two Republican mayors of major U.S. cities supported the poverty bill. Every church group in this country has supported it. Life Magazine editorialized in favor of full funding. Businessmen have bought ads to support it.

The Urban Coalition, composed of business leaders, labor leaders, church leaders, and public officials, spoke out strongly this fall for a program that will do whatever it takes to make urban America liveable and give every American citizen the skills and the opportunity he needs to work and earn.

In this very city, not two weeks ago, C. J. Haggerty

pledged the full cooperation of the Building Trades unions in rebuilding urban America, opening training opportunities for young people who have not previously had the chance to learn a productive trade.

Yes, building a stronger and better America:

That is a mission for front-row fighters, not back-row cynics.

Yes, the people -- the great, unselfish, creative people of America -- are ready to complete democracy's house. It is up to us to see that they are heard in 1968.

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When it comes to foreign policy, the Coalition of Retreat is strictly non-partisan. It embraces all kinds of people with just one thing in common -- the notion that the United States can safely turn its back on this shrinking neighborhood we call the world.

There are the aid cutters. Back in Harry Truman's Marshall Plan days, when this country was half as rich as it is today, the United States devoted 2 per cent of its Gross National Product to foreign aid.

Today, in this time of rising expectations and ferment around the world, the aid-cutters would reduce our assistance effort down to less than a third of one per cent of our GNP -- a sum which, in President Johnson's words, 'reduces the margin of hope to the danger point.'

There are the protectionists who want quotas to favor a few special interests in this country. They are willing to overlook the fact that retaliation abroad would cost us our overwhelmingly favorable balance of trade, throw American workers out in the street, raise prices for the consumer, and threaten the dollar.

Finally, there are those who doubt the importance of our commitment in Asia, and especially in Vietnam.

Do we have any business there?

More American lives were lost in the Pacific than in Europe during World War II. Add to that our casualties in Korea and Vietnam.

Since 1946 we have committed more than 25 billion dollars worth of loans, grants, food and technical assistance into countries in the arc between West Pakistan and Japan.

That commitment to national security, and to national development, in Asia has been upheld by four American Presidents.

It has been upheld because they have seen it in our clear national interest that a continent at the strategic crossroads of the world... rich in resources... possessing more than half the world's people should not be nakedly exposed to Communist pressure.

It has been upheld because we as a nation have believed -- or at least I thought we did -- that peoples of all colors, races and religions deserved their chance to grow and develop free of coercion and tyranny.

What has our support for the efforts of free Asians achieved?

Japan is a prosperous, stable democracy.

South Korea is secure and on the verge of economic self-sufficiency.

Formosa has achieved economic self-sufficiency.

India and Pakistan have stable progressive governments. They are making substantial progress in agriculture, population control and industrial development.

Indonesia, potentially the richest nation in Southeast Asia, gained time to throw off -- for and by itself -- a flagrant attempt at a Communist coup, and is now embarking on the long road to economic development.

All the nations of Asia have joined together in new regional cooperation.

Looking ahead, we can predict that economic development will be painfully slow... but that without it there will be chaos.

We can predict that mainland China will soon emerge as a nuclear power... still preaching and supporting the dogma of the cynically-misnamed "wars of national liberation."

We can predict that Asian communism will continue for the foreseeable future to retain its militancy.

We can predict that free Asian nations will continue to reach out to us for help.

We can hope that our policy of containment without isolation of China will someday yield the same kind of peaceful coexistence we have now achieved with the Soviet Union.

That is the broad context in which the American people must decide what they want to do about the immediate issue of Vietnam.

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We must also see it in the context of morality.

War is hateful. War is not popular -- and it should not be.

But I believe it is moral to defend the national security of the United States by trying to halt aggression before it can lead to World War III.

I believe it is moral to protect the weak from terror and violence and armed attack.

You all remember the shiver of shame that went through Americans when a young woman was murdered not long ago while over twenty of her neighbors looked on and refused to intervene. Is that the kind of morality we foster in America?

I believe it would not be moral to advocate that we take our stand on the shores of Australia and New Zealand while weaker people of a different color are over run.

America's goal is a world without war. That was our objective even as we fought the costliest battles of World War II. That has been our objective through a generation of crisis.

We are not the policemen of the world. But we have stood guard -- with others, in Europe, in Latin America and in Asia, in hope of preventing a holocaust.

Only last week we once again helped prevent a savage and potentially disastrous conflict in the Mediterranean.

We shall continue to stand guard, and to keep our commitments.

I do not know how long we shall have to stand. I claim no powers of prophecy.

But we shall stand in Vietnam until there is an honorable peace.

That is not a commitment for the fearful.

That is not a commitment for the Coalition of Retreat that

sells short the courage, patience, wisdom and idealism of America.

That is a commitment for those who believe in this nation, in its peaceful purpose, and in its strength.

* * *

No, America will not shirk her tasks: Security and development at home... and security and development abroad.

But we would do well to heed the words of a great President who had to bear the burdens of an even more terrible war... and who found America even more fraught with misery and frustration at home, Franklin Delano Roosevelt:

"The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with strong and active faith."

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