

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Announcement of Veterans for Humphrey Committee --
made to Vice President Humphrey by Committee Chairman
L. Eldon James, Senate President's Room, August 12, 1968.

Chairman James introduced members of the Committee
to the Vice President. James then made the following remarks:

JAMES: Our organization is in gear with a number of co-chairmen from around the country - five regional directors and an organization with a chairman in each state and in many of the large cities. Your record is clear and forceful in the field of concern for veterans, their widows, and their orphans. It is not a johnny-come-lately record. It is a stable record that dates back to when you were mayor of Minneapolis, and through all of that record and your record in the Senate of the United States and as our Vice President. We are proud of it. Your stand for a just and honorable peace in Vietnam is important to our land and to all the world and we are ready to work with you for it. Your strong and firm insistence on respect for law and order in our institutions of government is known and is vital to our citizens and we of the Veterans for Humphrey Committee offer you our hearts and our hands in the campaign in the expectation that

on November 5, 1968, we will have had some part in providing for our nation and for the world your vision and your firm leadership at the helm of our country.

HUMPHREY: Thank you very much Eldon and my thanks to all of those who have joined us here today. As you said, this is a working session. We will retire from this reception room very shortly with the members of the committee to go into my personal office - the Vice President's Office to discuss in some detail, our plans and our efforts in the months ahead. I want to just visit with you as an old friend and have a chance to talk about some of the things that we have been working on for a long time. Your support Eldon, and all of you, means a great deal to me. This is a high point in my campaign representing so many of the nation's 26 million veterans. I want that figure to sink in because 26 million veterans with their families represents a very large percentage of the American population and your representation of a large number of this 26 million, I think, will be one of the most important forces in my campaign. It also has this effect Eldon, of just making me want to do a better job. I believe that some people feel compulsion to do a better job by the discipline which is exerted on them. Others are motivated to do a better job by the trust placed in them. I think I'm quite typically American, when I

resist the push and the shove, but I feel highly motivated and inspired when I have the faith and the trust of the people like yourselves here today. I can tell you that I will not let you down. My record of public service since the days when I served as mayor of a city where I worked tirelessly for housing for our returning servicemen, for a better educational opportunity for them; that record up to this date will not be sacrificed by any type of political expediency. It will be strengthened and improved by deep commitment.

Now it is not only a matter of numbers that makes your committee so important to me. It is the quality of the committee and it is the fact that it represents men and women who have sacrificed so much and risked even more for our country - a country that we all love so much. You have made reference to our efforts in the legislative chambers. Well, we have worked together and I can remember in the earliest days of my Senate career how we stood together - all of these organizations represented here and others - in behalf of good, modern professional, medical care for our returning servicemen.

Those were the days when it appeared for awhile that we might lose the good beginnings that had been made immediately after World War II. I had the privilege of helping to sponsor legislation that saw to it that our veterans' hospitals would have the best professional medical personnel and that the medical care that would

be given to the veterans and their families and the servicemen and their dependents would be of the highest quality that this country could provide - that is a minimum standard and nothing will be done to jeopardize it and in fact much done to improve it. We have had a philosophy in this country which I think is right and proper relating to the veteran; namely that he has every right to ask the best of us. He has given the best of himself for the nation. He or she having served in the forces of this country has the right to expect the best of the American community.

We are at a time now in our life when our Armed Forces are made up of people of every race, creed, and nationality. I have said so many times and I want to repeat it here - that the civilian economy - the civilian structure of this nation must be willing and prepared to provide equal opportunity to every man who ever served in the Armed Forces of the United States with the same degree of attention and the same degree of fairness and persistence that the Armed Forces have provided.

I don't want to see our democracy upside down where there is more democracy in terms of equal opportunity in the military than there is in the civilian economy. I think the civilian economy must set the example. This means education, jobs, decent neighborhoods, housing. It means entrepreneurship. It means equal opportunity to

every man regardless of his race, color, or creed and particularly to those who have been called upon to serve in the most incredibly difficult assignments that this nation has ever put upon any group of men and women.

I speak, of course, of those who are in Vietnam and am reminded of that excellent production "Same Mud, Same Blood" which tells us that we are talking about Americans and Americans are entitled to American treatment. They are not entitled to any kind of treatment of inequity or inequality. They are entitled to the best. I don't think there is a more wonderful title in the world, a more wonderful description in the world than to be called citizen of the United States of America. We ought to treat each other in just that way and that is the way we want to treat our veterans and their families and the serviceman and his family.

Now you have made some mention today, Eldon, of our efforts in Vietnam and our efforts at the peace table. You know that I believe in national security. I have talked to some of you at your conventions, and in your legislative conferences. I believe that we have the best chance to gain peace through the most capable diplomacy that we are able to forward and to present plus strength. I've never looked upon our armed forces as anything but a peace force, and I've never looked upon our diplomats as anything but agents

of peace. This nation is dedicated to peace. It is dedicated to honorable peace. It is dedicated to national security and national development; it's dedicated to a world order of peaceful accomplishments.

Today in Paris, we have two of our most able negotiators backed up by a team of the best that this country has to offer to seek an honorable peace - not appeasement - but an honorable peace that will serve not only our national interests, but will basically serve the interests of mankind. I want to thank you for your willingness to be helpful in that very important endeavor.

Let me just say a word about the forthcoming campaign. I want to get down here to what we call the nitty gritty of our effort. You're not supporting just a candidate -- I don't want this to be looked upon as just a personal relationship -- even though that will be very rewarding to me and very helpful. I've spoken about the Open Presidency. This means a Presidency that is in constant contact with the people and the representatives of the people -- not only the elected representatives but others.

I want you to know that the Presidency and the door of the Presidency will be as open to you and those you represent when I am elected President as it is now when I seek your help to be elected

President. That door is not going to be closed, now is it going to be in any way restricted to you and to those others who represent the American people. So I say that you are not supporting just a candidate, you are supporting our goals. Eldon James has stated them very succinctly: peace with honor, national security, civil order, civil justice, the rebuilding of our cities, the rehabilitation of our communities, and the revitalization of American Life.

I am proud to say that our great veterans' organizations have been deeply involved in the improvement of education and of health facilities throughout this country. As Thomas Jefferson once said, "You can't be both ignorant and free". Since veterans' organizations are dedicated to freedom, they are dedicated to the eradication of ignorance, and since they are dedicated to citizenship they are dedicated to the eradication of all forms of discrimination. I am grateful for your support. I've read your veterans campaign plan and we are going to discuss that a little later. I can't get everybody in on that, but we will be getting it back to you a little later on. I think it is excellent and we are going to implement it. This means that we must have effective, dynamic state chairmen and city chairmen working closely with the Citizens for Humphrey Headquarters in every state and here at the National Headquarters.

I'd like to see with some good ad copy in our veterans publications and then get down to that other part of the nitty gritty, the necessary finances and that will really test us. I'd like to see direct mailings to every post commander in the nation. I'd also like to see our veterans and families represented, if you please, at every airport reception, at every rally and be there. You know everybody is a sign painter these days, and we all have a sort of amateur art work interests. I hope that some of my veteran friends will be willing to paint a few signs too, that tell your message.

I believe in free speech. I even believe in free placards and I believe in any kind of peaceful demonstration. If you want to join in one with your kind of signs, I would kind of like that too, because I see lots of other signs. Your help is needed in something else - in voter registration. I noticed in the morning press that there was a survey made of what we call the low income areas and we found that the voter registration in those areas was about 1/3 of what it is in moderate or middle income areas. No one has a greater stake in government -- of government policy -- than the deprived. What you and I need to do is convince the people in low income areas through our activity and voter registration efforts that the way to rectify

any inequity, the way to change any policy that is wrong is not in the streets, it is not out there through violence or even loud raucous demonstration. It is to do it through the peaceful political processes.

I believe that there is not a single inequity in the country that we cannot change through the peaceful political processes if we set ourselves to the task. I call upon my veteran friends now to help us in these low income areas in particular to get people registered and then politically informed. They will make their own choices. I'm not sure how they are going to vote, but one thing I do know is they ought to be voters. That is the way that we are going to make people feel that they have a stake in this country.

Well, that is about all I guess I need to say on the get out the vote campaign. I will talk to you more before we get to election day. Then after election day we want to up-date and let me go on record right now. We want to completely re-evaluate and up-date all of our programs that relate to veterans' benefits and to the lives of those who served in the Armed Forces.

Let's take a look at the whole structure of those who are in our armed forces to see whether or not the rewards for service faithfully performed are adequate. Let's take a look to see whether or not these men and women whom we call into the Armed Forces

have decent housing on their military bases. I have visited more military bases than most any man who runs for public office, and I see these young families on these bases with old barracks, with inadequate housing. We can afford to take care of the people who take care of this nation. We can afford to see that they are properly cared for while they are in the service. We can afford to see that when they come out that those GI benefits, as we call them, are updated and adequate to the needs of our people. We can afford to see that any man who served in the military Armed Forces and who served faithfully and well is treated respectfully and treated with equity and equality and with dignity when he comes back to the American civilian economy.

That is the way that I feel. If I am President of the United States and I am privileged to be the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of this country, the Armed Forces are going to have respect, they are going to have good treatment, they are going to have the kind of care and attention that is required of a first class nation. I am going to see to it that the veterans of those Armed Forces are going to be treated with the same kind of fair play, the same kind of compassion, the same kind of decency that we would expect of someone that saved our lives because make no mistake about it - the Armed Forces of this nation



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