

VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
TV PANEL SHOW WITH AREA COLLEGE STUDENTS
KPRC-TV, HOUSTON, TEXAS
RAY MILLER, NEWS DIRECTOR

- - -

"CONFRONTATION POLITICS"

Wednesday, September 11, 1968

Houston, Texas

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8 11:30 a.m.

9 MR. MILLER: The technique of seeking high office
10 in the United States is changing constantly. We rarely see
11 the candidates on train platforms any more. We still do see
12 them, some, at outdoor rallies and meetings and we see them
13 increasingly on television, and in this campaign we are seeing
14 the candidates for President increasingly inviting questions
15 and inviting the opportunity to make spontaneous replies to
16 queries about their policies and philosophies.

17 This form of confrontation politics is particularly
18 favored by Vice President Hubert Humphrey, the Democratic
19 nominee for President. It is our pleasure today to have the
20 Vice President of the United States in our studios and also to
21 have with us four Houston College students who will be
22 questioning him about some of the things youth wants to know
23 about the direction the country will take if Mr. Humphrey
24 is elected President.

25 I would like to introduce to you now Jeff Cox, a
history major at Rice, who has just come back from spending the
summer in Vietnam as a Baptist missionary; Babette Fraser, a
political science student at St. Thomas University; Craig
Washington, a senior law student at TSU, and Larry Doherty,
a second year law student at the University of Houston.

We will begin the questioning with you, Jeff.

MR. COX: Mr. Vice President, the key term in Mr.
Nixon's approach to the Vietnam War seems to be summed up in
the word de-Americanization. This sounds good to me but I would
like to know how you feel about the feasibility of a serious
de-Americanization of the Vietnam War and how your approach
to your problem would differ from Mr. Nixon's? How you feel
it would differ?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Well, Jeff. I am sure
we would all like to see a de-Americanization of the war in
Vietnam and by that I gather the lowering of the number of
troops that America has committed to that area, the systematic
phased withdrawal of troops when and if that is possible.

That is a hope and maybe it is a hope that in part can

1 be realized, but it will depend upon two things.

2 First of all, the degree of attack from the north,
3 coupled with ferocity of the attack from the Viet Cong, in
4 other words, the intensity of the attack from the enemy, and
5 more importantly, the capacity or the ability of the Army of
6 South Vietnam known as the ARVN, to become a combat effective
7 military establishment with modern weapons and modern
8 equipment and modern training.

9 Now, there are some indications that that is taking
10 place. As a matter of fact, there are very -- well, there are
11 very reassuring indications in some of the units, but I would
12 be less than honest with you if I didn't tell you that there
13 is still quite a way to go before you can say that the Army
14 of South Vietnam is capable of self-defense of the Republic.

15 Now, I had hoped and expressed the hope that we
16 might be able to have some withdrawal of American troops. I
17 said earlier that we might see that, hoped that we might,
18 in 1969, early 1969, and even in late 1968, the hope.

19 This, of course, is the statement that President
20 Tsieu made in Vietnam and one that has been mentioned by
21 General Westmoreland and Secretary Clark Clifford. But that
22 hope depends, as you -- I think that your question indicates
23 -- depends upon the effectiveness and the capacity of the
24 Army of South Vietnam. Otherwise, the hope is not going to
25 be very quickly realized.

MR. MILLER: Babette?

MISS FRASER: You are no longer saying, then, that
that calling back of the U.S. Marine Division that was
deployed there was of the -- you are not saying that this
was one of those troop withdrawals that you hope to see?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: But it is a troop with-
drawal of a temporary unit. It was a unit that was put in
at the time of the TET offensive of about 4500 as I recollect,
and some 700 or more of those are being brought back.
Another 1500, by the way, have been discharged, some of
them due to injuries and for other reasons.

There is a military unit, an Army unit, that will
replace the 700 that are being brought back. That is a temporary
unit that had a temporary purpose which is being brought
back, but it is still my hope that if the program of training
which General Abrams was responsible for under General
Westmoreland and now promotes, if that program of training of
ARVN continues and if the mobilization continues in South
Vietnam, it is still my hope, and I speak now privately as a
candidate, that it is my hope that we will be able to see
some limited withdrawals of American forces but again, that
depends on the intensity of this war.

MR. MILLER: Craig?

MR. WASHINGTON: Mr. Vice President, as a student

1 of the law I am interested in the phrase "law and order",
2 which has come out of this campaign. It seems to be one of
the primary issues facing the major candidates.

3 Now, to me if law and order means law enforcement,
4 I think we are all in favor of law enforcement, but it seems
to me that law and order means different things to different
5 people. To a racist it is a battle cry. To the moderate
it means status quo. To the liberal it means total
equality.

6 Now, I think we are all in favor of total equality
and that we are all in favor of strict law enforcement as
7 long as it is equal strict law enforcement. Then I could say
that there would have been no need for the 13th, 14th
8 and 15th Amendments or the Civil Rights Act, or other
legislative acts.

9 Now, if this is what the other candidate -- I can't
think of his name -- if that is what he means by law and
10 order, then what would be your position on law and order as
an issue in this campaign? What would you do about law
and order if and when you are elected?

11 VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I happen to think that the
issue of law and order means civil order and civil justice. I
12 think they are two sides of the same coin. I am speaking
about law enforcement. You as a student of the law, are
13 surely aware that our society depends on the rule of law and
that lawlessness, organized crime, violence really does not
14 lend itself towards social progress or towards a constructive
and wholesome society. But I do not want to have any words
15 of mine interpreted as a sort of a racist cry, law and order.

16 The law and order applies to white and black. It
applies to lawbreakers. It applies in terms of law enforcement.

17 Now, law enforcement includes many things. It even
includes building code enforcement. It includes public health
18 code enforcement. It may very well include for the more
enlightened citizen of today some rights that I believe belong
19 in the 20th Century Bill of Rights, namely, the right of a
man to have a job, the right of a person to live in a decent
20 neighborhood, the right of a child to have an education,
the right of personal security.

21 Now, I want to see a dedication to law enforcement,
to the protection of people's rights. I want to be sure that
22 life is secure insofar as we can make it secure. But I also
want those who are pounding the table on the issue of law
23 and order to keep in mind that these areas of infection, the
areas of rural poverty and deprivation, of urban poverty and
24 deprivation, lends themselves to lawlessness. There isn't
any doubt about that. Any sociologist, any lawyer, any
25 observer of the American scene knows that the highest incidence
of crime is in the areas of the greatest deprivation and most

1 of the crime is committed against the poor. Most of the crime.
2 And much of the crime today is juvenile crime.

3 So, when we are talking about crime as such, we have
4 got a tremendous problem on our hands without regard to race.
5 It is right across the board. When we talk about violence,
6 that violence today is related to some of the great social
7 problems which we have, but violence cannot be condoned and I
8 am sure that any man that is a student of the law feels as I
9 do, that violence is the abhorrence of law and it is contra-
10 dictory to law.

11 So, we have to suppress the violence but in so doing,
12 let's not lose sight of the injustices and the inequities
13 which plague our society.

14 MR. MILLER: Larry?

15 MR. DOHERTY: Surely all Americans value the question
16 and answer series provided but more important than that,
17 is the airing of conflict with our opponents to open public
18 debate and in this thing I am curious to know if you are in
19 favor of the legislation recently designed to do away with the
20 equal time requirements so that you and Nixon could debate
21 on TV without George Wallace?

22 VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I am prepared over TV,
23 at county fairs, rodeo, or in a hotel lobby.

24 MR. DOHERTY: Are you willing to debate George
25 Wallace?

26 VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I am willing to debate any
27 man who seeks to be President.

28 MISS FRASER: Nowadays, since the Chicago Convention,
29 no one, including journalists, has been able to really give
30 a credible explanation as to why newsmen seem so singled out
31 by the police as being attacked. Would you care to comment
32 on this? I am not speaking of demonstrators but of the
33 newsmen.

34 VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I really don't know. I
35 frankly, don't know and I think it is most regrettable
36 because after all, people who report the news must have
37 access to the news. Now, where were some who said newsmen
38 just got caught up in the confusion of the occasion. Somebody
39 asked me what do you do about it in a riot? I said, get
40 away just about as fast as you can but for a newsman that isn't
41 his job. He is there to report and he runs grave risks, just
42 exactly as some of our war reporters run the risk of losing
43 their lives, and they have in Vietnam.

44 But for the police to single out the newsman, I
45 think is unpardonable if that has happened. I cannot say
46 it happened because frankly, I generally -- I know about the
47 Chicago riots or the Chicago violence, I should say, about
48 what you know. Namely, I read about it. I looked out the
49 window on a couple of occasions but from the -- I have

1 forgotten what floor we were on now but I think it was the
2 24th floor -- looking out, I didn't always get as good a view
of it as I might have liked.

3 MISS FRASER: Wouldn't you say then in your
4 opinion the news media did as well balanced coverage of the
5 convention and the outside demonstrations as was possible in
the limited circumstances caused by the riots? Is this your
6 opinion of well balanced coverage or not?

7 VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I guess that I am supposed
8 to be very candid with you and I would say I don't think the
9 balance was all there and I doubt that it ever is where there
10 is violence because the violence generally gets the attention.
When man bites dog that gets the attention and I don't --
11 I am not trying to chastise anybody for this but a pleasant
12 conversation such as we are having here is really not quite
13 as exciting to the news world as if we all would have a real
14 riproaring rough and tumbling rassling match around here.
This is just the way it is.

15 I mean, I don't know what we are going to do about
16 it. I hope that we can take a more balanced view in many of
the things that we do.

17 My own view was that the most important news in
18 Chicago -- of course, this is my subjective view -- was what
19 was going on in the Convention and not so much what was going
20 on outside of the Convention. But if you are a newsman, you
21 have a different point of view, you see.

22 I had a rather personal interest in what was going
23 on in the Convention and I was very saddened by what went on
24 outside the Convention. I think -- well, I think it soured
25 a great deal much of what we were trying to do inside the
Convention.

MR. MILLER: Craig?

MR. WASHINGTON: Mr. Vice President --

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Yes, Craig.

MR. WASHINGTON: In the area of new level politics
there is a concept that if you find a social institution
where -- using, for example, a comparable building, if you
find a building with a faulty foundation, say a major crack
or crevice, and you know it is impossible for the building to
remain, is it better to destroy the building and start anew or
attempt to patch up the cracks while knowing --

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: In a society where there
is no peaceful way to get redress of grievances I suppose some
people would justify the actions of destruction. As one
who was once a professor of political science I can remember
some of the philosophical discussions of even the right of
regicide, but in our society where through political action
and social action, through the peaceful processes, you can
gain redress of your grievances I don't believe that you can

1 justify burning down, tearing down.

2 I heard one of the militant leaders, for example,
3 in Chicago say that he was -- he wanted to burn down the society
4 and build up on its ashes.

5 Well, that isn't necessary today. That is not
6 necessary. We are able to change law.

7 Now, I happen to believe that the same people that
8 want to have law and order also ought to take a look at laws
9 and see whether or not they are just laws and if they are
10 not, we should change those laws. I have been engaged in that
11 all of my life, changing law for what I believe was the right
12 the right direction of a just law. I just believe that
13 when you start to make individual judgments in a society where
14 there is concensus by the governed, when you start to make
15 individual judgments as to which laws you will obey and which
16 ones you won't and which institutions you are going to tear
17 down and destroy, and which ones you won't, you start making
18 those individual judgments of what you are going to do and
19 you are going to do it if need be violently, you have
20 anarchy and anarchy lends itself to only chaos and chaos does
21 not lend itself to social progress and construction.

22 MR. MILLER: Jeff?

23 MR. COX: Could I ask your opinion on the difference
24 between civil disobedience and protest?

25 VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: There is a great deal of
26 difference between civil disobedience -- that is what we call
27 the non-violent protest -- and the violent protest. Now, the
28 people who engage in civil disobedience or non-violence,
29 they recognize they will have to suffer the impact of the law
30 if they violate the law. They enter that in a sense as
31 crusaders, knowing what they are up against.

32 For example, Reverend Abernathy in Washington, D.C.,
33 engaged in an act of civil disobedience. He knew that and he
34 knew that the penalty was, that he would be taken up by the
35 police. He knew that. He said so.

36 Now, he wasn't out trying to burn down something
37 or tear down something. He engaged in an active protest and
38 was willing to pay the price. That is what we mean by an
39 act of civil disobedience, and the law moved an on him.

40 Now, if the law is unjust, and he apparently thought
41 it was or others have thought it was, they can seek to change
42 the law, change it through men like yourself getting elected
43 to office, change it through public opinion, change law through
44 men like myself. I, for example, helped change the laws of
45 this country in the field of civil rights, to strike down the
46 barriers of segregation, strike down the barriers of segregation
47 in public places, change the law. I believe that laws need
48 to be changed but I don't believe, myself I don't believe you
49 change them through violence and frankly, I don't, speaking for

1 myself, I do not believe in changing them through civil dis-
2 obedience but there is a great deal of difference between
3 a non-violent demonstration and a demonstration that has
4 directed its energies and its purpose to cause destruction.

MR. MILLER: Larry?

MR. DOHERTY: I realize this question lends itself
to a wide discussion. I was wondering what specific counter
measures you as President would advocate now that Russia has
turned on the cold war facet again in Czechoslovakia?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Well, first of all, it is
quite obvious that we need to take a good hard look at our
NATO alliance and ask our partners in the NATO alliance to
take a good look at it. We are the ones that have kept up our
commitments and many of our partners regrettably have been
short on fulfilling their commitments.

Secondly, I would ask that we keep in mind that there
are some very important matters of common concern between
ourselves and the Soviet Union. We are the super powers and I
am looking at young people who have a great deal of time left
on this earth, if there is any earth for you to be on, that is
worth calling earth, and the world. We have created instruments
of total destruction. And we are in the process of creating
new instruments of total, of even greater destruction if
you can be greater than total.

Now, I happen to believe that it is in the interest
of humanity and our interests and the Soviet Union's
interest to slow down this arms race, to wit, I believe
that the nonproliferation treaty, the nuclear nonprolifera-
tion treaty, is in our national interest. I think it is in the
Soviet Union's national interest. I think it is in the
interest of world peace.

I do not believe that it is good public policy
nor is it good protection of America's national interest
for anyone to advocate that we now hesitate or fail to ratify
that treaty. I notice that Mr. Nixon has had doubts as to
whether or not we should ratify it. He is not being very
specific these days. He has doubts, but he doesn't come down
foursquare.

Now, those doubts that he expressed are going to
injure the policy, injure the possibility of the ratification
of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty.

I want to say that that is not an act of peace. I
think that that aggravates the international situation. I think
it precipitates greater danger in the world situation, and I
do not think it is representative of statesmanship.

We ought to ratify that treaty and we ought to do
it promptly. 80 other countries have done so. It is in
our national interest. So that whatever the relationship between
ourselves and the Soviet Union, let's think in terms of what

1 is basically in our national interests when our national
2 interest particularly as a worldwide interest is toward a
more peaceful world. I can justify mine in a moment.

3 I notice again Mr. Nixon takes the view on another
4 subject that is sort of even in between, the sort of
middle course that doesn't really tell anybody where you are.
5 He says Mr. Fortas is a fine man and yet his own Republicans
in the Congress joined by conservative southern Democrats
are blocking confirmation of that nomination.

6 Now, I want to use this program for the third or
7 fourth time to ask Mr. Nixon, are you for his confirmation
or are you not? Are you going to ask your Republican leader-
8 ship in the Senate of the United States, Mr. Nixon, your
Republicans, to confirm that nomination or are you going to
9 permit them by your silence to engage in an undemocratic
practice called the filibuster?

10 I want to ask Mr. Nixon, is he going to advise the
Republican members of the Senate of the U.S. to ratify the
11 nonproliferation treaty or is he going to weasel on that one,
too, wiggling and wobbling. This country doesn't need a
12 wiggler and wobbler. It needs a leader.

13 MR. MILLER: Babette?

14 MISS FRASER: One of the arguments, at least the
ones I have heard on both sides of the political spectrum
15 on the war on poverty, is that the poverty programs are very
far removed from the people affected. This is something --
16 now, do you believe that the contact with the people that
will bring the program closer to the people affected is a
17 good idea? If so, what specifically would you do?

18 VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I believe there have been
those charges but I want to say many of the programs operating
19 today are closer to the people than programs have ever been
before. We have presented in the United States over 10,000
20 people in Community Action Councils that have been elected
by the poor themselves to operate their own programs under
21 the Community Action Programs of the Office of Economic
Opportunity. This has never happened before.

22 There has been a struggle going on in the country
between what we call the establishment, the elected
23 representatives in city hall, and the community action
people out here in the communities of deprivation and poverty.
24 But this has been working -- there has been a meeting of the
minds and many of these Community Action Councils now
25 represent a blend of what we call city hall on the one hand
and the representatives of the poor.

We have had many elections in this country --
right here in the City of Houston, by the way -- for
representatives of the poor on the Community Action Programs.
In the Model Cities, and this by the way, I think is very

1 important, before a Model Cities application is really
 2 presented and the planning that goes into it, I think the
 3 representatives of the people that are going to be affected
 4 by that model cities program ought to be included in the
 5 planning, and if I am permitted to be President of the U.S.
 6 I will emphasize giving people the chance to make their own
 7 decisions. I want to caution you they will make some bad ones
 8 because people that have had no experience, been denied
 9 experience in decision making, are bound to make some mistakes.
 10 They have to get experience. They have to mature. But we are
 11 going to have to pay that price.

12 The War on Poverty is not flawless any more than
 13 the war on cancer is flawless. We have had poverty longer
 14 than we have had cancer as a disease and we don't go around
 15 throwing doctors out and condemning the medical profession
 16 because they don't succeed in the war on cancer, and we don't
 17 do it in the great doctors that are doing this fantastic and
 18 miraculous work in transplants.

19 I think this is one of the truly great possibilities
 20 and hopes for better life in Amerca, whast the medical pro-
 21 fession is doing, but many of the transplant patients have
 22 died but you don't go around saying to the medical profession,
 23 you failed, you ought to get up -- you ought to close up your
 24 hospital, we ought to take away your money.

25 We don't say that at all. What you say is look, do
 you think it will work? Can you improve? Here is some more
 money. Let's go do some more research. Somebody else comes
 on and says I believe I have found something that will be
 helpful.

Now, let's have the same kind, well, the same kind of
 tolerance, the same kind of patience in this war on man's oldest
 disease, poverty.

MR. MILLER: Jeff?

MR. COX: This may not seem like a major political
 issue but one of the major points of tension in the academic
 community on the university campuses and one of the many
 points of tension of the university, even between the
 university and the middle class, for instance, the white
 middle class, particularly, is the use of drugs on campus.
 I would like to ask you specifically if you feel like the law
 which says that possession of marijuana is a felony , is an
 unjust law.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: My own personal view is,
 no. I am originally a pharmacist. Let's quit kidding our-
 selves about marijuana. Marijuana may be not called an
 addictive drug by some but it lends itself to it and marijuana
 is just about as useful to you as having three headaches an
 hour. No use going around tapping yourself just to see whether
 you can take it.

1 The drug traffic is being exploited amongst
2 the young and when you read the crime statistics and see that
3 the young are the ones that are responsible for most of the
4 crime, I think we might ask ourselves how many adults have
5 contributed to that situation.

6 If I am President of the United States I want to
7 serve warning here and now there will be a massive attack
8 upon the narcotics problem of this country, Federal, state
9 and local, as I intend to help our local governments in terms
10 of improving the quality of their police, the professionaliza-
11 tion of them, better training of police, higher recruitment
12 of police and the better paying of the police.

13 All of these problems, by the way, require investment
14 of the public resources but this drug problem on the campuses
15 and high schools and on street corners has gotten totally out
16 of hand and it requires the prompt attention and the
17 massive attention, may I say, of every responsible public
18 authority.

19 MR. MILLER: Larry?

20 MR. DOHERTY: The President's Commission on Civil
21 Disorders reported white racism is one of the root causes of
22 civil disobedience and civil disorders and though we have
23 got conspicuous silence from the White House as embracing this
24 particular idea I want to know if you agree with the President's
25 Commission on Civil Disorder on that finding?

 VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: The Kerner report -- and
I had the privilege of reading it and my co-chairman, Senator
Fred Harris, was one of the authors of the Kerner report,
that is, the disorder riots commission report along with
David Ginsberg who was the counsel for the citizens
committee, co-chairman, so you see I had some degree of
involvement in this report -- that report said that we were
tending towards two societies, separate and unequal. It
was not an obituary of the American scene. It was a health
report. It didn't say we were dead or gone. It said that if
we keep it up the way we have been going, we are going to have
many more serious problems than we have today, and it did
point out that many of the institutions of this country were
in a sense infected by what was known as white racism.

 I think most of us realize that our institutions
are essentially Anglo-Saxon institutions. I think most of
us realize that practices of discrimination still prevail, even
though the law outlaws discrimination as a legal matter, that
segregation and discrimination are still habitual in far too
many people's minds and in far too many communities, and what
this report simply says is that we have to rid ourselves
of that and make this one nation really in fact, not just in
law, one nation, it said, under God.

 I think that phrase means a great deal. It didn't

1 say one nation under the statutes. But one nation in spirit.
2 And then, with liberty and justice for all.

3 I believe that the Kerner Commission report is a very
4 helpful document for this country and as you know, I have
5 commented on it very favorably and I will take, not only
6 take a look at it -- I have already done that -- but I shall
7 take that Kerner Commission report and try to implement as
8 many of the provisions as possible in terms of my Administration
9 as President.

10 MR. MILLER: Craig -- we have less than two minutes.

11 MR. WASHINGTON: Mr. Vice President, respecting your
12 views concerning civil disobedience, it seems to me that to
13 filibuster on the nomination of Mr. Justice Fortas -- it seems
14 to me that public officials who denounce the actions and rulings
15 of the U.S. Supreme Court are engaged in civil disobedience
16 because this is the law.

17 Now, heretofore I believe that civil disobedience
18 has been looked upon as a method by which the black man has attempt
19 ed to gain his equality.

20 VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Yes.

21 MR. WASHINGTON: But I think there is another side
22 to this coin, any time a person who is a public official is
23 sworn to uphold the law, he gets before the nationwide media
24 and denounces a decision of the Supreme Court, this is also
25 civil disobedience. Would you please react to this, sir?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I will be happy to react.
If a man gets up and says he is for law and order and in the
same paragraph starts denouncing the Supreme Court in its
decisions, and the courts and the Attorney General, he is
not doing very much for law and order. I am not going to call
him any names but I ask him to examine his conscience.

How do you expect people to have faith in the law,
believe in the law, respect for the law, when you start
demeaning and condemning the highest court of the land and
the highest law enforcement of the land? I think this is
unpardonable, and as far as the filibuster is concerned, it
may be legal but it is wrong and it is an undemocratic
practice and anyone that wants to be President of the United
States ought to condemn it and also ought to at least remind
those who are engaged in it, its supporters, to cease and
desist. That is a good legal term and I would suggest that
one who has been a lawyer and seeks to be President ask those
who are engaging in undemocratic practices to cease and
desist, and I would suggest as a lawyer he have respect for
the courts, the Attorney General and for the Supreme Court of the
United States.

MR. MILLER: Mr. Vice President, we are going to
have to cease and desist ourselves. I am sorry we have
exhausted our time. Thank you for being with us. Thank you,
Babette, and gentlemen.





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