

REMARKS OF VICE-PRESIDENT HUMPHREY
INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS
DETROIT, MICHIGAN
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1963

VICE-PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: -- - I am honored and pleased to be here today - - - I hope that every observer of the political scene will take note of that fact that every segment of organized labor, every great international, every part of it is represented here today in this great meeting that you are having of a united labor committee of the United Labor Political Action - - -.

And I am so pleased, because this is what it is going to take for us to win this campaign.

And Monsignor Kern, I have heard your praises so many times. And of course I know of you and your parish. Now, more important I know of your encouragement you have given working people -- -.

I consider it a rare privilege to be in your presence and receive as others have here today your blessing, and to have you offer the prayer for this meeting --because, believe me, if there ever was a time that we ought to prayerfully think about our country, it is now. If there ever was a time that we needed clear thoughts, clear thinking, if there ever was a time that we needed an honest, open discussion of the issues, it is now.

And how pleased I am that this meeting was opened by the invocation of the Right Reverend Monsignor Clement Kern, who is loved and so much loved by so many people here and elsewhere.

Now, I come to you as a friend. I don't have to have any brochure that tells you where I have been or where I have stood, and whether or not you have some reason to believe that I might be a friend of organized labor. I think you know better. I think you know the truth.

(Applause)

I think you know, whether you are of the industrial unions, the craft union, whether you are of the auto workers, or the teamsters, or the brotherhoods, or the mine workers, whatever it may be. I think you know that through my 25 years now, almost 25 years of public life, that I have had a record of unswerving support, just as you have also had a record with me of generous and loyal support in every political endeavor of my life.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, we have our chance now. We have been together. We have worked together, You have helped me in good times and in bad times, in times of drought and times of rain, in times of the wintry storms and the times of the bright sunshine of summer.

We have stood together in election after election. Some we have won and some we have lost.

And I think this is the crucial election of this period of our history, because there are forces at work in America today in large numbers that could set this country back, that could divide this nation irreparably, that could open wounds in our social body, in our body politic that it would take decades to heal, if ever. And we must not let these forces tear us apart. We cannot..

We cannot listen to the voice of the demagogue and the hater. We cannot listen to people who say that American shall be divided, that American shall be black against white, and white against black, and rich against poor.

We cannot listen to those voices, friends.

And that is what this election is all about.

The labor movement has been built on the principle of solidarity. Whatever your differences, you have learned how to

respect each other's picket lines, you have learned how to respect each other. And you haven't always had it just like you have wanted it. You haven't always agreed. And I don't expect any man or woman to always agree with everything I have to say, or everything I have done or may do.

But I do think that you have a right to know that I care. I do think you have a right to know that I will listen. And I do think you have a right to know where I have stood.

Now, during this campaign we have had many obstacles, and if you will permit me, I would like to just talk as a neighbor and a friend and as a brother.

We got a late start. Our convention of the Democratic Party was six weeks -- five weeks later -- between five and six weeks later than the Republican convention.

We were torn in our party, as we were in the labor movement.

I came into this campaign, not by any particular design on my part, but to put it quite frankly my seniority clause was pretty weak. My contract was running out. And then besides that, the management quit.

(Applause)

None of these things I had planned.

And then I had to do some replanning and rethinking.

And I know what the battle is. I know that it has been an uphill fight. I read and I see the polls, and I hear what people say.

I know that during the summer great tragedy befell us -- just about the time that our efforts in the Democratic Party were moving along into what I call a fair and heated and spirited contest -- one of the most gallant of our men, a gifted, brilliant United States Senator, was shot down. Another member of a great family taken by the assassin's bullet.

Now, you and I know that that soured the whole thing. It left us sick at heart. It left this country sick at heart.

And then we went through this period of trying to put the pieces back together.

There were Kennedy forces, McCarthy forces, regular Democrats, Humphrey Democrats. There were all kinds.

I'll tell you, we had more different kinds than Heinz has got variety, or beans.

And then we went to a convention, and we had two things happen. We had a struggle in a convention and we had a catastrophe outside of it.

That convention, for all practical purposes, wasn't over until Labor Day. Ordinarily you would have your campaign all geared up by Labor Day. Ordinarily under any other terms you would have had your convention over in July.

But with an incumbent President who undoubtedly at that time thought he was going to run -- the convention was put late. Then he decided not to run.

And by Labor Day we were just coming out of the convention.

I have had people say to me -- well, why didn't you get a faster start, Mr. Humphrey.

Start? Ladies and gentlemen, we were trying to drag ourselves up out of a ditch.

In the meantime, the Republican Party is well financed and they have got their balloons and their confetti, and they have got their parades and their slick advertising, and they have been on the television, dear friends, from the last week of July up until this very minute.

The man you are talking to never had one single television spot or radio announcement from the 19th day of August to the 27th day of September -- not one. We didn't

have any money. And we had to go around and try to piece things together -- get our friends in labor to pull together, get our different groups in the Democratic Party to pull together, get some people to come out and say they would help.

But I have good news for you.. We have pulled it together. And we have got a fighting organization now, and we are going to whip the living daylights out of them.

It hasn't been easy. But because it hasn't been, the wine of victory will taste all the sweeter --all the sweeter.

(Applause)

Let me make it clear. This is not just my election. I happen to be the standard bearer of one of the parties -- the Democratic Party. I want to be President. I hope that I have gained the experience and the maturity that would make it possible for me to be a good President. I want to be your leader. I have some ideas that I want to put into action. I want to give this country leadership. I want to be its teacher. I want to call forth the goodness that is in the American people and not the pettiness.

I want to call forth the greatness that is in the American people. And I think there is greatness in the people.

And I want to see this nation of ours mobilize its resources to help people become better people.

You know, dear friends, some of the finest people that we have today in America that are making the greatest name for themselves only ten years ago, fifteen years ago, were the children of the poorest of the poor.

Now that the Detroit Tigers won the World Series I think you won't mind if I mention that Bob Gibson, the great pitcher of the St. Louis Cardinals, wrote a book entitled "From the Ghetto to Glory".

Poorest of the poor.

That Olympic team that is in Mexico City right now -- take a look at them. Many of them the children of the poor -- white and black.

Some of the greatest artists that this country has today -- children of the slums -- going up. Some of the greatest architects, scientists, doctors, entertainers -- children of the poor.

Ladies and gentlemen, there are millions of young people in America, young and old, that have never had a chance. And when they get a chance, it is not only going to be better for them; it is going to be better for you -- because every time that a man learns how to stand on his own feet, every time a person becomes a productive citizen and a self-respecting citizen, every time that a person can crawl out of the ditch of poverty, into the high ground of a decent life, America is the richer, you are the better off, and the individual to which this blessing has come is so much happier.

This is what it is all about.

Mr. Nixon says this fellow Humphrey, he wants to spend more on these programs to combat poverty; this fellow Humphrey wants to spend more on education; this fellow Humphrey wants to spend more on health; this fellow Humphrey, he said he wants to double our investment in cities.

Mr. Nixon, you are right. That is exactly what I want to do. And it can be done.

(Applause)

I feel very deeply about these things -- because if we don't, there is going to be an explosion in this country.

Dr. Conant, great teacher at Harvard, great educator, talked about the social dynamite of our cities.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am here to testify that every dollar that we make available for human rehabilitation, for the cleaning up of our cities, for the improvement of our social institutions, for the betterment of our neighborhoods, for the education of our young, for the health needs of our people, for the care of our elderly -- every dollar that we make available out of public or private resources comes back ten-fold. Don't worry -- it comes back.

Let me show you.

We have a family on relief. The only country that can afford welfare is a very rich country. And it is bad for the country and bad for the individual, if the person is capable of work.

Every time that you train a man that has been on relief and welfare and make him productive, and train him, and place him, and get him a job, or his wife gets a job, and you build a day care center so somebody can take care of those children, you don't need to worry about that you are spending a lot of money. You have a way to get it back.

Ever hear about withholding?

(Laughter)

You have all heard about that, haven't you? It is just like a sort of -- you know -- one of those little machines that slices the sausage -- out, cut, cut, cut -- pretty soon no sausage. Withholding.

I'll give you an example. This is a true story. And Father, Monsignor Kern, you will enjoy it. It happened at Loyola University. I used this -- I told somebody about it the other day. It actually happened.

There was a woman there who had been nothing but trouble to herself and had lived a very, regrettably, unfortunate life. No man in the house, three or four children -- one of those things that we face.

She was on relief.

She was brought into one of our training programs that the federal government helped work out with Loyola University in New Orleans. And she was trained after several months to be a secretary. And she got a job as a medical secretary. And she has that job today in a medical book publishing house.

This woman, when she got her first check, she was ecstatic. She was so excited.

She came back to her teacher and -- because they had a system of follow-up to see how you are getting along on your job -- and she showed this teacher her check. She said "You know, I have never seen a check that I have ever earned, that has my name on it -- this is my first time. I am so happy." And the teacher said "Well, it makes me happy, too, because when you get that check, it means then that my efforts have paid off, have been successful."

Two weeks later she got her second check. She came back and she said to the same man, she said "What's this little tag on the end here that has got a little stub there, that has got some things on, some numbers written on it -- it has like SS, and Withholding, and all that". And the teacher said, "Oh, I forgot to tell you, that is the listing of the taxes that you are paying". She said "Oh, I am paying taxes." He said "You are indeed. You are on a payroll, you are paying taxes." She said, "I'm so happy. I have never paid taxes in all my life." She said "I know now that I am a citizen, I am really -- this is really a wonderful moment". And the instructor was very pleased.

About a month later this woman came back for her regular

interview with her counsellor, and she had a check, and she held it out, and she was angry, her face was red, and she was shaking, and she held that check. She said "Look here, look at the taxes this government is charging me". And the teacher said "Now, that is rehabilitation".

(Applause)

Well, ladies and gentlemen, that's it.

The losers are the non-productive people. a country with non-productive people.

Now, what we need in America is a system to provide for those that cannot work through no fault of their own, adequate income; and for those that can work and want to work, jobs and job training.

And you put Hubert Humphrey and Ed Muskie in the White House and you will have that kind of a system.

(Applause)

Now, I want to say just one other -- you know, Mr. Nixon said he was going to double the rate of his prosecutions. He has a public works program of building jails and penitentiaries:

Now, we may need more. But I want to tell him that for every jail and penitentiary that he wants to build, I want to build a new, clean neighborhood for people to live in. And that is what we ought to be thinking about.

(Applause)

Now let's have a little word about law and order -- because I have been going all through this. I am the only candidate in this election that has ever had to be responsible for law and order and really fulfilled it.

Now, Mr. Wallace, he is the great law and order man.

I want to tell you something. I hope and pray by goodness that we don't bring Alabama law and order to Washington, D.C. or this won't be much of a country to live in.

(Applause)

Some of you were down in the street there today and heard me. Let me just repeat it again.

Here is the man that runs around this country -- he is a big, tough fellow. I call him and General LeMay the Bombsey Twins, you know. They have ways of settling everything. If you don't like what they are doing and you get in their way, he said -- I will run over you. Well, I don't think the automobile industry really wants that, Walter, and I don't think that is any way to run a country. And the other man says, that that is on the Vice-Presidential ticket, if they don't give us -- if they don't have peace, we will bomb them back into the stone age.

Well, this is a very enlightening way to talk about the world in which we live.

There are no simple answers, friends. And anybody that gives you them that simple -- watch out.

Mr. Wallace's platform -- not a word about the United Nations, not a word. Not a word about how we are to seek peace. No -- there are so many voids in it I won't talk about it. I will only say this -- that the main thing he talks about is law and order. And what is he really talking about? Black and white -- and you know it. Let's just lay it on the line.

And how much law and order did he have in Alabama? The highest murder rate of any state in the Union. That's the worst kind of crime. The second is what we call aggravated assault, and he had the second highest rate for that.

The Governor of Maryland, his State has the fourth highest crime rate.

My Vice-Presidential candidate comes from a State that has the fifth lowest. And I come from the State that has the

15th lowest.

So if you are going to put it on the basis of who has the lowest crime rate, we ought to get the election without the votes.

(Applause)

But Mr. Wallace's law and order program is as phoney as a three dollar Confederate bill. And let's just face it.

And any union member that believes that George Wallace, the third party candidate, is for him is a man that is just angry at his wife, or had a fight with his best friend.

(Applause)

I ran a police department. I was mayor of the city. I had to do something about it. And I tell you one of the first things I did when I became Mayor of Minneapolis -- I got myself a new Chief of Police, put new inspectors and deputy inspectors in. And then I doubled the police salaries. That's the first thing I did -- number one.

Number Two -- I gave them the first forty-hour week of any police department in the United States, Walter. And they didn't have to come up and twist my arm, either.

And Number Three, I put more officers on

And Number Four, I sent them to the university for specialized training in community relations and human relations.

And Number Five, I said -- listen now --

(Applause)

-- I am going to expect professional performance, because you are getting professional pay.

Now, if you want a better police department in any city, you are going to have to pay for it. And no city in America today can afford it alone.

I want to tell you -- I am not here to give speeches for mayors, but there isn't a mayor in America that has the resources that he needs for the jobs that need to be done. And that is why we need federal aid to these cities. And federal aid to the cities is helpful. The property tax is breaking people in many of our cities. And you know it.

(Applause)

The fairest tax is the progressive income tax. That is the fairest one.

(Applause)

And I have laid out a whole program of how we are going to help our cities and how we are going to help our police departments, and how we are going to do these things.

I am not going to bother you with the time today. It is there and your unions have it, and it is in printed form, it has been on the radio, it has been on television.

But I'll tell you -- you don't get it from what Mr. Wallace said the other day.

They said "Mr. Wallace, what are you going to do if you get to be President for the police?" He said "I am going to give them moral support" Well, that will be a skimpy diet, I'll tell you that.

Here is a man that says he is for law and order. He refuses to obey the laws that he doesn't like. He stands in front of a school door and when the court says that children should enter it, he says "Don't enter".

He respects the judges that he likes and vilifies the others. He obeys the court orders that he likes and defies the others. You try it sometime and see what happens to you.

And you want him for President.

Now, if you want to vote a frustration vote if you just feel you have to be damned mean and ornery sometimes, find some other way to do it, will you. Don't sacrifice your country.

(Applause)

(Applause)

Now, let's talk about the other side, the economics. You know, I listen a good deal and I hear a good deal. And I know what is going on. I'll tell you what the scuttlebutt is, and I'll lay it on the line. And this is what is going on in many a union. It is this.

"You know that fellow Humphrey" -- the propagandists say -- "You know what he wants to do? He wants to put black people on those jobs and that means I am going to lose my job as a blue collar white worker."

That is what they are saying. I know that.

Well, let me tell you what I want to do.

I didn't take a look at your color. I just believe in jobs. I believe in an economy that provides jobs. I believe that if the economy can't provide the jobs, then it is the responsibility of the federal government to help provide the jobs.

I believe in full employment. And I believe in it for whites and blacks, fat and thin, tall and short.

(Applause)

And not only that -- may I say that as you add more on, on the seniority system -- every time a new one comes in, you go up. So you don't get hurt.

But this is what is going on in the neighborhoods. And you know it.

Now, let's go out and stop it.

There is only one danger that you face, and that is if a Republican administration gets in -- because Wallace isn't going to get in -- he can help wreck the constitutional processes, but he is not going to be President. But he can fix it so that Mr. Nixon is. And if the Republicans get in, you won't need to be worried about what color you are -- you will be out of work. And I'll tell you that.

(Applause)

Will you ever.

If you don't believe it, take a look at the last time they were in.

Listen -- ye shall judge them by their deeds saith the Scripture. And I say it another way. Just judge them by how they perform. Three recessions, eight years.

I was in Detroit. I saw your unemployment. And maybe you haven't forgotten it. And you owe it -- you owe it to your membership to tell them. You owe it to these younger ones. A lot of the young union members that have come in, all they had to do is pay their dues. They didn't have to fight. They didn't get beat up when they fought for a union. But you owe it to them to tell them, because they have got mortgages, and they have got a family.

And I'll tell you -- you just have that paycheck stopped for a couple of months -- see what happens to that little bungalow they bought, see what happens to that car, and see what furniture is repossessed. And so on down the line.

I tell you this is your election, not mine. I have still got my house. I will be able to take care of most of the mortgage for a while. I will.

I want to be your President. But I am not going to be your President at the expense of my convictions. That is where we start.

(Applause)

And you have got to get the shop stewards, you have got to get those people that are out there in the plant to start to talk to people. They have got to begin to understand that the White

House is not for sale, that it shouldn't go to the biggest bidder, and it shouldn't go to the man with the highest advertising budget, because if that is the case, then you are just wasting your time fooling around with me, because I don't have that big a budget. As a matter of fact, it has been bare bones. And I have to depend upon you a great deal, and I am going to.

I am going to find out whether or not the people run this country or whether the public relation firms run this country. I am going to find out whether your vote runs this country or the TV runs it. We are going to find out in this election.

(Applause)

I am not going to go through all of Mr. Nixon's record. Good grief, I want to be happy for the rest of the day.

(Laughter)

I will just say this. I will say this. That you can search through the annals of the Congressional Record and you won't find a single piece of major legislation on which he has his name.

I'll tell you, that is something I have been trying to find out.

The Mayor of this city offered free facilities over here at Cobo Hall for George Wallace, Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey. And I want you to know I am ready and I am in shape. I can go fifteen rounds.

(Applause)

So here is what we are talking about.

We are talking about jobs. We are talking about schools. We are talking about our kids. We are talking about our grandparents. And to every young worker let me tell you Medicare does you as much good as it does your mother and father, because when you have social insurance like Medicare, you don't have to pay their hospital bills, and you don't have to have them go down to the relief office and plead that they are poor, or you don't have to wonder how you are going to pay that bill.

Listen -- Medicare is a godsend.

And Richard Nixon said it wouldn't work. He was opposed to it.

Ladies and gentlemen, listen -- this election -- the issues are so clear. But he doesn't want us to know the issues. That is why all the confetti, that is why all the balloons, that is why all the hoopla.

They say he looks calm and poised and he is cool and he is confident, and they say he is a new Nixon. I say that is a lot of baloney.

(Applause)

And I'll tell you something else. It's the same old crowd -- with one addition. He picked up someone that left us -- and by golly in 1948 one man, when I got up to speak, saw the exit sign in the Democratic convention -- just like that sign, right back there -- it said "Exit". And I got up and said it is time for the Democratic Party to walk out of the shadows of states rights and stand up forthrightly in the bright sunshine of human rights. And old Strom Thurmond, magnolias and all, whistling Dixie, got up and walked out.

(Applause)

He decided to change parties. He did the right thing -- I'll tell you that. He came clean. I will say that for him.

He got right over where he belonged. He became a Republican.

And I thought -- well, in light of all the newness that I have been reading about, this man that now understands that we are in the 20th century, and that Mr. Nixon is a changed man, and everything -- I figured, well at least you couldn't expect

him to take that man around as an advisor, particularly when he had Rockefeller and Lindsay, and you had Percy, and he had all kinds of people that were supposed to be liberals, that are at least reasonably liberal.

But what do you think happened when he got really in trouble? He panicked, thought he might not get the nomination on the first ballot. And he went on off, and there he found General Strom Thurmond, over t here, in uniform and all. And he said "Let us talk". And they sat down and they cooked up some political medicine. And I want to tell my dear friends, it isn't geritol.

(Applause)

And the result of it -- the results of it are yet to be all unfolded. But the first result was the choice for the Vice-Presidency on the Republican ticket.

I want to tell you, my dear friends, if I have done nothing for you in this country in my life, except what I did in Chicago -- I can tell you this -- that I performed a great service for this land, and I say it modestly and immodestly, but I say it truthfully -- I performed a great service for this party and this land when I asked the convention to nominate Ed Muskie as my Vice-Presidential nominee.

(Applause)

You better take a look at these first selections. You better take a look.

Just remember, one out of every three men that has ever held this office of President in the last fifty years has never lived out his term. I don't like to say that. But it is a fact. And we have got to be aware of it.

We are talking about our country now. We are not talking about running a theater or a pop corn stand.

One out of every three -- either through natural causes or assassination.

And, ladies and gentlemen, you just think about the prospect of a General LeMay or a General Agnew -- just let that one sink in -- I mean a President Agnew -- let that one sink in for a little while. A man who said just yesterday that he didn't really think that the people who were poor knew much about poverty, he preferred to talk to the experts.

I want to tell you, folks -- you really got to be hung up to talk like that.

(Applause)

So we are talking serious business, ladies and gentlemen -- talking about your life, we are talking about your family, we are talking about your vote.

And I am going to leave you -- I've got other work to do. But I want you to go to work, as you have never worked before. I said shop stewards, local officers.

I know that some of you are going to be -- some of you in some of the unions that are business agents, you are going to ask yourself -- well, do I want to get in a fight for Humphrey, because t here is a lot of Wallace support in this union. Well, let me tell you something, dear friends. If you want a union-busting President, if you want a right-to-work-law President, you go ahead and get him.

But I am here to tell you that if you want somebody that will work with you -- I saw somebody t ht had one of these buttons on for our migrant farm workers. When I get to be your President, we are going to amend the National Labor Relations Act so that migrant farm workers can bargain too.

(Applause)

So we are in it together. And if you are unwilling to risk your position, to fight it out, then why should I risk mine. But I am going to fight it out, and so are you, because we are made of sterner stuff. And we are going to have a new Presidency. And when I become your President, we are going to take a great look at this whole country. Not that others haven't done well, because they have. We are ever indebted to John Kennedy, and we are ever indebted to President Johnson. We have had great programs of social progress in this country.

(Applause)

But as I have said -- I will not hesitate to evaluate every policy and every commitment of our country abroad. And I will take a look at every commitment and policy at home.

This is a new time, a new period, a new day.

Our cities need help. We are going to have another hundred million Americans to be with our American family in the next twenty-five years. Where are they going to live? How are we going to house them? How are we going to educate them? How are we going to keep this economy growing so there are jobs?

Can you imagine the bitterness in America, can you imagine the trouble in Detroit if you had ten per cent unemployment in this city?

You just let that one sink in.

Can you imagine what young and old alike, black and white, would do?

We have got to keep this country moving ahead. We have to trust one another. We must be a united people. We have to be for ourselves, and we may even have to stand alone, some day, in this world. So we are going to need every American working at top performance -- every American. And we are going to have to have the best performance out of this country possible. And that is what I am dedicated to.

I want the young people to know that they will have a President that they can talk to. I want them to know that the White House will not be a fortress -- it will be a welcome house.

I want you workers to know that you will be as welcome there as my family. I want you to know that I am going to be the people's lobbyist. I want you to know that I am going to do everything I can to realize the American dream, where we judge people on merit and performance, not on race or religion or how they spell their last name.

(Applause)

So let's go to work now. Let's get going and win this election.

Thank you.

(Applause)

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