

REMARKS OF
VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
TO NEGRO MINISTERS

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Detroit, Michigan
Thursday, October 17, 1968

Thank you, thank you. Thank you very much, Bishop Baber. Thank you very much. My, how I wish my voice tonight were as full and as strong as that of Dr. Brookins that I just listened to a few moments ago, and this dear and wonderful friend of ours, Bishop Baber, and Dr. Allen, but I have been doing as much speaking, may I say, as any preacher ever did, and I have been trying to save a few political souls.

(Laughter)

I want very much first of all, to tell you that I am very deeply moved, very sincerely, very sincerely grateful for your presence here, for the words that I have just listened to in your resolution.

I have had a long day. We got in here from New York City last night after 4:00 o'clock in the morning and we started with a very heavy program today. Yesterday we had ten meetings and the day before I guess eight or ten. I am trying to do what you try to do, I am trying to bring a message to the American people. And I have been trying to bring the very message that I heard from this platform tonight. And that is the message that every person, every one of God's children is entitled to equal chance, to equal dignity and to equal respect.

(Applause)

I wonder if you all know how much it really means to me tonight to see this culmination of a lifetime of work. I have always been interested in what we call human rights, what lawyers and others have called civil rights. I grew up in that kind of a family. But there are some old friends here from Minneapolis. Dr. Nelson knows of my days back there in the Twin Cities when we fought hard to set up the first Human Relations Council and it was really ecumenical, Protestant, Catholic, Jew, black and white, and when we passed the first Fair Employment Practices ordinance, when we integrated the Police Department, it wasn't a difficult problem, I suppose, because people said that there weren't very many blacks there anyway, but we had plenty of prejudice. It doesn't take many, you know, to get a lot of prejudice.

But we did it.

One time when I was addressing the great organization, the NAACP in their convention in New York, I remember so well one of the speakers got up and said, we consider Hubert Humphrey John the Baptist of the civil rights movement and I got up and I said, you remember what happened to John's head, don't you?

(Laughter)

And I want to tell you, even if it required that, I would be proud to have been associated in this fight for what I call human rights that you have all been involved in.

(Applause)

We are at a cross roads in this country and you know it and I know it. I have been trying to tell the people of this country what the central issue is in this campaign. I have said the question is, are we going to trust each other? I said the central issue is, are we going to have a country that is united in trust or are we going to have one that is divided in suspicion and hate, and I have said that this issue is an issue between the people's of this land and there are people that make it a racial issue, and

when some people say law and order what they are talking about is black and white. We know that.

(Applause)

I come to you with just a few credentials. There are people here that can stand up in a good old revival meeting like I have attended and say I was there when I saw Hubert Humphrey enforce the law in my city but he didn't enforce it on one group of people any differently than he did it on another. In other words, equal -- equal protection of the laws and equal enforcement of the laws.

(Applause)

I just talked to two or 3,000 people in this big hall and I said that is not just laws that you talk about as law and order. I am talking about housing laws, too, and I am talking about building codes, too, and I am talking about sanitary laws, too.

(Applause)

So, we are talking about the same thing.

It is good when a family gets together. I have been a member of your family as long as you have been a member of mine. We have been together on these things, dear friends. And I don't come here with, well, as a Johnny-Come-Lately. I come here early. And I am so happy at long last to see that without -- whatever little differences we may have and I am sure that some of us have little differences, whatever those little differences may be, that we have been able to resolve them for a higher purpose.

Bishop Baber said something here tonight to you that he said in the Cabinet Room of the White House as we sat there after the death of the Beloved Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I remember that day. We wept together. And I remember he looked over across the table at the President and he said, Mr. President, there was an old preacher that once said that in the worst of times we must do the best of things. And then we walked out together and I said, Bishop, come with me. Come with me and get in my car. We are going over to church.

In the worst of times -- now, these are difficult times. I don't know whether they are the worst but they are difficult, and because they are difficult, we must do the best of things.

(Applause)

We know what some of that means. I have been out with the labor movement in this city today and I have been talking straight to them as I did in St. Louis, and my friends are here from St. Louis. We were together last night or the night before last. Time seems to escape me here. But I said to them, listen, I know what the rumors are. I know what the gossip is. The gossip is this. This is what the opposition puts out to the blue collar white worker. He says watch out for that Humphrey. He is going to get a black man a job and that means your job. That is what they say. They say whisper it.

And you know what I said to my friends in the labor movement. I said, now, listen here, I am for jobs. I am for an expanded economy in this country. I am for decent jobs and I am for jobs and I don't care whether he is black, white, green, or purple, fat, thin, tall or short. I am for jobs.

(Applause)

But I also told them something else. I know that a people that have been deprived and denied for over a century sometimes need a little extra friendship and a little extra help. Sometimes equal opportunity is not just quite enough.

(Applause)

Let me give you an example. A child is the victim of malnutrition. We have seen it happen. And that child is deformed in a sense, I mean, it is sick and it is picked up by someone and they take it to a hospital and the doctor examines it and the doctor says this child is on the verge of death. This child has a dietary deficiency, protein deficiency, mineral deficiency.

This child is sick.

You don't say, now, well, let's give -- everybody is eating hamburgers today. Let's have everybody have a hamburger. That won't cure the child. That child for a while needs a little extra, a little extra.

(Applause)

My dear friends, the boy or the girl that lives in the slums and has been the victim of separate but unequal treatment, a boy or a girl, white or black, that has never had a good education, a boy or a girl that has never had a chance for training or a decent home and never had a chance to live in a decent neighborhood, I don't care whether he is white or black, that boy or girl needs a little extra of the bread of life.

(Applause)

And my dear friends, that is why I want to be President. I want to see that they get a chance. I got one. I want them to have as good a chance as Hubert Humphrey had and they are going to have it, so help me God.

(Applause and standing ovation.)

Now, let me just say one or two other things to you. I am not going to keep you long. You have been here a long time. YOU have really touched my heart a great deal. I would have been a good preacher if I wasn't such a sinner. I am glad you included those five million sinners in there, Reverend. I thought you were going to leave me out.

(Laughter)

But let me tell you this. You don't have to really philosophise too much or get too detailed about what we are trying to do. Somebody asked me, he said, just what is it that you are -- what are you trying to do? Well, I have a sort of a basic religious conviction. I am not exactly a man that goes around parading every day what my religion is. I seldom ever have my picture taken going to church. I figure that is my business and I just sort of have my own way of doing things. But you know, in the church that I attend at home in Minneapolis when I am there in my home city is the First Church, First Congregational Church there. The minister in that church gave a sermon and here is what he had as the caption at the top. You fellows are getting pretty clever now with those programs you put out there. You get some neat little phrases on that so that you catch all the parishioners going out. All the members of the congregation remember exactly what you were trying to say in a sermon that might be a little longer than just those two lines and I do well to remember that, too.

(Laughter)

This minister's theme for that day was as follows, and this is my religion. The way you treat people is the way you treat God.

(Applause)

That is it. All the other things, all the parading around and all the rest of this, that is dressing. That is trimming. It is people that count. And I mean all kinds of people.

Now, listen, we have got a wonderful treasure in this country and you are part of it, and so are other people. We are all part of it. I like to think I am part of it.

We have a great treasure here of human resources. Besides that, we have got a great adventure going on in this country. We are the only country on the face of the earth that has ever dared to try to make what we call a biracial, a pluralistic society work. WE ARE GOING to see whether we can do it in a spirit of community, whether we can do it in a psirit of unity, whether we can do it in a spirit of fellowship, or whether or not it has to be apartheid, and we don't want that, and that is why this campaign is important.

Now, I don't want to get into the personalities but we have

one candidate that is just plain talking, well, he is talking about pre-Civil War. He is talking about --

VOICE: Tell it like it is.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Youbet I will tell it like it is.

(Applause)

We have one candidate that is appealing to people's fears, their anxieties, their frustrations, their suspicions and their hatreds. Ladies and gentlemen, that is dangerous. People have done that in other countries and have ended up with a tragedy.

That man can't win. I know that. But that can poison the social and the political atmosphere of this country, and that is why I stand out on street corners until my throat is horse telling the people you must not listen to those voices.

Now, there is another candidate that says he doesn't believe that, but he says we are going a little too fast. Let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, I said in 1948 that we were already 176 years late.

(Applause and standing ovation.)

Dear friends, let me tell you something. You know, it is very easy for people to say you are going too fast if you have got everything you want.

(Applause)

It is like somebody said here the other day, an economic adviser, he said maybe we need a little more unemployment and I said, yes, for whom? Which man?

You know who will be laid off first. You know.

Let me tell you that is why this election is your election and mine, too. We are in the fight of our lives. I will be honest with you. I am behind and when I am behind in this election, so are you.

(Applause)

I have only got one thing to work with in this election and that is the trust of the people. Now, we have worked together. There are people here that know. We have wept together, worked together, we have fought together, we have been defeated together and we have won together. We know each other.

Now, this is one time, my friends, where the chips are down, as we say, and I don't -- I want you to know that we can win this election. We can win it.

(Applause and standing ovation.)

VOICES: We want Humphrey. We want Humphrey.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Thank you, thank you. You have got me.

(Laughter)

But I have got to be very honest with you. We have got to get more than just us.

Now, what we want to do is just go on out and talk about our country. This is our country.

You know that I was reading tonight, just a few minutes ago -- they are always telling me I have got to hurry and go, you know, I have got a big schedule -- and I was reading tonight about some of the history of the American Negro. Every white boy and girl needs to know it. Otherwise, we will never, never, never get this understood.

(Applause)

Let me tell you, my dear friends, you at Bunker Hill there was a black man there, and more than one. Let me tell you, my dear friends, there was one who was the closest friend of George Washington that stood by him at Valley Forge and there was one with Abraham Lincoln and there were thousands of them.

Listen, I was out to the River Rouge plant today. Who is building these automobiles? Who has helped fight our wars? Who has helped build this country and our railroads and our factories?

You know we have done it, we have done it together, black and white. And that is the way we are going to save this country. We are going to save it together but we are going to have to have leadership to do it. And I want to be your leader. I really want to be your leader. I want to help.

(Applause)

Now, I want you to do me -- I want you to do a favor for our cause. I want you to go home to your respective communities and I want you to talk to every person that you ever talked to in your life. You really have only 19 more days before the decision will be made and if that decision were made tonight, my dear friends, I am afraid we would be counted out. But we have got 19 days. The Lord made the world in seven. We ought to be able to do something in 19.

(Applause and laughter)

18 days. He made it in six, gave us one to lay off on, you remember that.

(Laughter)

I am just checking that out with you, Bishop. That is right. OK. But in all seriousness, 19 days.

Now, what can we do in 19 days? Forget about the fact that we are going to be able to match dollar for dollar. We can't do that and I know that. My opponent has already book and bought four hours of television time the Saturday before the election. National. I would hate to tell you how much that cost. You could every one of you build yourself a brand new church. It is really fantastic. We can't match that. And I don't intend to try to match it. I intend to try to get some. We are going to ask people across America to help us and they will.

But I will tell you what we can do. You can go from block to block and you can talk to every person you know and let me tell you, you can talk to them white, black, red, brown, green, purple. We don't care. Talk to them.

And I will tell you what else you can do. You can appeal to people's sense of dignity and I want you to do it.

Now, I tried to get my opponents to debate me. They won't do that. They are not going to do that. Say, I would like to see them come up before any audience and debate us. I have told you -- they are not going to do it. I know that and I am going to quit talking about it because they are not going to do it. It makes it look kind of foolish after a while but we can go to the people.

Now, what are we going to go to the people with? We are going to go not only with a candidate but we are going with a program. You and I know that these great American cities of ours are sick today. They need help. You know that. If you don't know it, who would? Look at where many of your people live. Look at how they have to live.

Let me tell you, if you don't want to do it for an adult, for Godness sake, look at a little child and say I want to do it for that baby and that little boy and that little girl.

(Applause)

Every day as I go across this country I see these little children and I love them and some of them are crippled and some are not and some of them are bright and some of them are not but every one of them is God's testimonial to his faith in the future. Every one of them. And my dear friends, we have got to make this America worthy for them.

Now, maybe we can't fix it up fast enough for you or for me. Maybe we will be gone to our -- whatever reward it is that we are going to get. But I will tell you this, that if we work at it, we can make it a better place for those little ones. And that is what our objective is.

Now, when I am your President, I want you to know that that place called the White House will be a place that welcomes black

people and it will be your house just as much as it is my house.
I want you to --

(Laughter and applause)

-- know that and I want you to know that it will be a mecca for your little ones. They will love it because it is theirs just like it is mine.

And I want you to know that we are going to redouble our efforts and our programs of education and training and we are going to try to make it so that people regardless of race, color or creed can be owners, property owners. We are going to try to have safe neighborhoods, not only in the suburbs for the whites but in any place where anybody lives.

(Applause)

And let me tell you something else. I moved into an integrated neighborhood down in Washington, Southwest Washington. And it is within three blocks -- now, this is a fact, and you come down there and look -- within three blocks there is public housing, low middle income housing, and the kinds of housing that I live in that you know is more expensive. I live where it is real nice and fancy. Within one block there is this low middle income and within the third block there is public housing.

We have got a park right out in front of our apartment. We all play together out there. The other day we were playing out there, Sunday. There were four or five little children there. They were black and white. They were playing together, they didn't have an ounce of prejudice. They haven't got old enough yet. Not a bit. That is a fact. And there was little Clyde and Clyde was a black boy and there he was and he was building a highway. And there was another little fellow over here and I think his name was Carl and he was making chocolate cake with super duper frosting, and then there was little Theresa and little Theresa was running back and forth all the time all over the place and finally Clyde said, Mr. Vice President, you can't build highways with Theresa running across them all the time.

(Laughter)

We were having a wonderful time out there, working and working together.

What I want to tell you is, I moved into this neighborhood, totally integrated. And now, what? The property values didn't drop a bit.

(Applause)

They let me in and it didn't hurt anybody.

Let's just face up to it. Let's just face up to it. Let's face up to it. What do we believe in in this country? We believe in freedom of choice. Some of us want to live with our relatives. Some of us want to live in our -- with people that are just like us. Some of us don't. We believe in freedom of choice. We believe in the right that we are going to judge men and women in this country not on the basis of birth, not on the basis of how they look, not on the basis of how they spell their name. We are going to judge people on the basis of merit, on the basis of performance and if you can perform, if you have got character and if you have merit, they you are entitled to respect and if you are not, it doesn't make any difference whether you are black or white. You are not entitled to it. It is just that simple.

Well, I want you to go to work now. I am going to go to -- let's see, I go to Hartford, Connecticut, early tomorrow morning and we have got a big day there and then we are going to be up around all through Connecticut. We are going to be there.

You have enough power, my dear friends. I am not talking black power now, I am talking vote power.

(Applause)

You have got enough vote power and you have got enough pride, just good personal pride, to want to make something happen in this country.

The world is watching to see what this country is going to do, make no mistake about it. The world is asking, are we able to make this democracy work? And I tell -- I want you to tell the world that we together can make it work. We can keep our communities better, make them better. We can keep the peace, and why? Well, I will tell you something. Pope Paul said something not long ago that every Christian ought to remember and every Jew and every gentile and every other person. I don't happen to be Catholic. I am protestant but Pope Paul said development is the new name for peace. Development. And when we develop people, when we develop neighborhoods, when we develop decent communities, that is when we get peace, peace at home and peace abroad.

We are going to do it. We are going to move mountains, my friends. We are going to have a period in the next Presidency that will be something of which you can be proud because you will be a part of it and I want you to know I am going to ask for your help. I am not going to ask for your vote, I am going to ask for your advice, I am going to ask for your counsel, I am going to ask for your help, and we are going to move things in this country.

We are not going to let American cities rot from within and the people within them rot. We are not going to let this great America of ours be divided and torn. We are not going to let people vote their hates, either. We are going to appeal to them to vote their hopes in this election.

(Applause)

So, as we say at those old prayer meetings, give me your hand and give me your heart. And really I need it. I do ask you now, you have given me a resolution, you have given me a great gift here today, a great gift of your confidence. I promise you I will never do, at least I will never knowingly betray that confidence. I will try to merit and earn your respect, your continuing respect, but I simply have got to bear down on it.

Friends, we have got to work as we have never worked before. We have got to stir people. We have got to get out in our neighborhoods. You have got to make this your cause. You dear friends, are running for President, you work your heart out because you are running for President. You are running with me. You are on the ticket with me. You are in this fight, and let me tell you something, if you go back to wherever your community is and you talk and just talk to people from your heart you don't need to use -- you don't need to talk about Democrat or Republican; just talk about what we are trying to do and get people to be aroused and stirred to make this country what it ought to be, this great American realm of America, of one nation, yes indeed, and it says one Nation under God and as one Nation under God indivisible, and it also says with liberty and justice for all. Let's do it.

Thank you very much.

(Applause)

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