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MEET THE PRESS

Produced by Lawrence E. Spivak

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1968

GUEST:

HON. HUBERT H. HUMPHREY, Vice President of the
United States.

PANEL:

David Kraslow - Los Angeles Times

Charles W. Bailey - Minneapolis Tribune

John L. Steele - Time - Life

Jack Perkins - NBC News Correspondent

MODERATOR:

Lawrence E. Spivak

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1 MR. SPIVAK: Our guest today on MEET THE PRESS is Vice
2 President Hubert Humphrey, the Democratic presidential candidate.

3 We will have the first questions now from Jack Perkins of
4 NBC News.

5 MR. PERKINS: Mr. Vice President, the public, I imagine,
6 is caught in a welter of these confusing reports about what may
7 or may not be happening on Vietnam.

8 Could you shed some light on that for us?

9 VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Well, it seems to me, first of
10 all, that the most definitive statements would come from the
11 President. I have made my statement on Vietnam. I listen and
12 watch very carefully as to what is happening. I believe there
13 are indications that bear some significance. There has been a
14 lull in the fighting; there has been very low casualties;
15 there are sensitive negotiations under way and I believe that I
16 make my greatest contribution to the success of these negotia-
17 tions by maintaining a discreet silence on them.

18 MR. PERKINS: Well, without discussing the negotiations
19 specifically, you say there is a lull in the fighting. Do you
20 consider that to be a lull or, as some military people, do you
21 consider that just to be the result of a withdrawal because
22 North Vietnamese troops have been beaten rather badly in a few
23 engagements?

24 VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I really don't know, but I know
25 there is a lull in the fighting and I think that is of some

significance and particularly because the casualty rate is very low. These are factors which, of course, the top officials of our government and the officials in Saigon must take into consideration as well as our negotiators in Paris.

MR. PERKINS: Well, given what you know -- perhaps much of it which you can't tell us, but given what you know, are you hopeful that there may be a break, there may be a cessation to the bombing; there may be some kind of at least tentative agreement before November 3th?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Well, I am hopeful that there may be --

MR. PERKINS: Fifth, rather.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I am hopeful that there may be some break. I don't know when it will come. I think that the sooner it comes the better for all of us, but let us hope that nothing happens that will break off these negotiations or in any way interfere with what seems to be under way now. So you ask me the question, am I hopeful. The answer is "Yes."

(Announcements)

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MR. BAILEY: Mr. Vice President, at your press conference this past week you said that you thought you were fifty-fifty or better in 19 states with 251 electoral votes. That is 19 short of the electoral majority.

It seems to me that your arithmetic, the figures that you

1 listed, suggests the best you can hope for now is not to
2 win outright, but to deny a victory to Mr. Nixon on election
3 day and thus put the election into the electoral college and
4 perhaps into the House of Representatives.

5 Now, you may not agree with that reading, but if you
6 could accept it for the purpose of argument, just for a minute,
7 could you tell us whether and how you thought this election
8 could be resolved in the electoral college if it is not settled
9 a week from Tuesday?

10 VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Well, Mr. Bailey, first of all,
11 I do not accept your reading. Those figures that I gave you I
12 mentioned in an interview some of the states where I thought
13 we had at least a fifty-fifty or better chance of winning. I
14 had no idea of how many electoral votes they added up to. I
15 intend to win this election. I intend to get 270 or more
16 electoral votes. I want to see this election won that way and
17 that is my intention. The states that I gave to you as being
18 what I thought favorable to my candidacy were based upon sampl-
19 ings made a week ago or longer. We have been on the rise.
20 There isn't any doubt about it, that there is great momentum
21 in my campaign, so let's make it clear first, I intend to win
22 this election.

23 Now, let's take your hypothetical. The first thing, of
24 course, that happens is by December 16th the electoral college
25 will meet and cast its vote. It is to be hoped that that

electoral college will cast the vote according to the pluralities or the majorities that exist in the respective states. I surely want no deal and I hope that no one else wants any dealing or any maneuvering with the electoral college. If there are not 270 electoral votes at the time the electoral college meets, then it goes to the House of Representatives, and a House delegation, state by state, must vote one vote on the basis of a majority of that delegation from a particular state. It takes 26 state delegations to elect in the House of Representatives a President. The last time that this happened I believe was in 1824 in the instance of John Quincy Adams. Prior to that it was with Thomas Jefferson in 1800. That is all I know about it.

MR. BAILEY: Let me ask you, do you think that the system is workable? Do you think it will work if it has to?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Yes, I do. I hope that we will follow the constitutional processes. I trust that the members of the House of Representatives, if it goes to the House, will follow what they believe to be what is best for this country, to select a man that they believe could best serve this country, could best govern this country, could best lead it into the future.

MR. BAILEY: Some of the states you mentioned specifically the other day included Ohio and New Jersey, a couple of states with a lot of electoral votes which every survey that I have

seen suggests are going to Mr. Nixon. I wondered, what is your basis for optimism in Ohio and New Jersey and in California, which you put in a chancy category and which seems very firmly on the basis of surveys to be on Mr. Nixon's side.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Yes, I put California in the chancy category. I was very frank and very candid and honest with you men as I spoke to you about it. I think that we have a better than fifty-fifty chance in New Jersey and in Ohio. I have a good reason to believe that, out of surveys that have been made in depth.

You know, we do not get these surveys to please us; we get these voters surveys and polls to give us some sense of direction as to what is happening, and I believe that the trends indicate that we are on the move and one of the sure things in politics that is vital and important is what is the trend as you move to election day and I think the trend is absolutely in our favor.

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MR. STEELE: Mr. Vice President, if you are elected President, a question very frequently asked of me and other journalists is what kind of people you will use to staff your Government, both on your personal staff and in the Executive branches.

Have you been able in this mad campaign period to give any thought at all to this; not as to individuals, but what type of people will you staff this government with?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Indeed I have, Mr. Steele, because I think your question bears directly upon both the integrity of government as well as its capability and competence.

We both, all of the candidates have had one chance to demonstrate the kind of quality, or the quality of man that they would have around them, and that was in the selection of the Vice President, and the recommendation that we made to our respective conventions; and I just leave it to the public to make their decision.

I selected Mr. Edmund Muskie, a man that I considered to be very capable, honorable, a man of maturity, of judgment and experience. I believe that that first selection indicates to you the kind of man that I believe we need to have. I believe that in the Cabinet we must have men of broad vision that are looking to the future, that have an intimate knowledge of the country in which we live and the problems that it faces.

I see the possibilities of a Cabinet in which you would have people who are not all Democrats. I think that it may be very necessary to have in such a close election as this a government in which you place the responsibility upon people who have the country's interests at heart, yet may be of a different partisan flavor.

Now, I have looked into this, and I have what you might call a talent search underway for many posts in this government.

MR. STEELE: Does that mean that you may turn to a sort of coalition government in the British sense of the word, so far as the Executive Branch is concerned?

Would you appoint some Republicans, perhaps?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I wouldn't call it coalition, sir. What I would say is looking for the best man. And when you get into some of the more sensitive areas of our government -- and you know where they are -- you must really think about what is best for your country.

Now, I think that we can find most of them within the Democratic Party. But what I am trying to say to you is, not let politics stand in the way of getting men that I believe to be the very best that this country has to offer, because we have immense problems to face at home and abroad.

MR. STEELE: Now, Mr. Vice President, some people have written about the Presidency as a sort of -- the greatest

secular pulpit in the world.

I wonder whether you see this, the use of this so-called pulpit, as a change to knit people together in our society who have sort of gone off. I refer particularly to some of the younger generation, some of the intellectual communities, some of the black militants. There are others. Now, what is your idea about using the Presidency for this purpose?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Mr. Steele, I have spent a good deal of time both as student and practitioner in politics on studying the office of the Presidency. I have been close to it as Vice President.

I believe that this great office offers the man that occupies it the greatest opportunity that you could possibly have to be a teacher as well as a leader. To try to talk sense with the American people, to build public opinion, to set at rest some of the rumors that may be spreading through the land. To try to bring people together. The word has been used frequently, "consensus." I am not sure that is the adequate word. What I think is more important is understanding. A tolerance and a forbearance, and a sense of reasonableness on the part of the people. A President by his demeanor, by his openness, by his actions, by his words, can do these things.

I imagine that you know me well enough to know that I would look upon the Presidency as a great opportunity to call for the goodness of the American people, to appeal to their

1 basic decency, which I believe is there, and in these times of
2 crisis -- and they are times of crisis -- to appeal to the
3 greatness of the American people.

4 There is a character about the American people that needs
5 to be called forth. That character, well, of integrity, of
6 decency, of goodness, and a willingness to sacrifice.

7 My Presidency is not going to be one of ease, either
8 for me or the American public. It is going to be one of chal-
9 lenge, sir, and it is going to be one of trying to bring to the
10 American people a sense of trust. Trust in their institutions,
11 because they are responsive to human need, and trust amongst
12 each other.

13 I don't think we can do anything in this country unless
14 we have that sense of trust, and with our young people,
15 finally, I want to put into the office of the President an
16 Office of Youth Affairs, where young people can feel that they
17 have a contact with the President, where the President is willing
18 to listen, to understand -- not always to agree, but where young
19 people will be brought into Government, both on the basis of
20 dialogue as well as a basis of participation.

21 MR. KRASLOW: Mr. Vice President, with law and order,
22 so-called, such an important issue, the question of who will
23 direct the FBI in a Humphrey Administration becomes quite perti-
24 nent?

25 Mr. Nixon, I believe, has indicated he would retain

1 Mr. Hoover. Senator McCarthy, when he was a candidate, said
2 he would fire him. What would you do?

3 VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I haven't made any decision
4 about that. I will talk that over with the new Attorney
5 General that is appointed. I will talk it over with the
6 responsible people that surround me. I don't think that
7 I should be making appointments on the air, individual appoint-
8 ments. I have a high regard for Mr. Hoover. I haven't had a
9 chance to talk to him as to whether or not he is anxious to
10 continue to serve. But the question of law and order doesn't
11 depend on one man. The question of law and order depends on
12 a host of governors and mayors and local officials and governors
13 and it depends upon the attitude of the Federal Government
14 and its willingness to put in resources, to strengthen law and
15 order, to strengthen police departments, to train police offi-
16 cers, to lift their level of competence, to provide the training
17 and the equipment that is required.

18 I think to simplify law and order on the basis of one
19 man, or on the basis of the Attorney General, or the condemna-
20 tion of the Supreme Court, or just to put a bumper sticker on
21 an automobile and say that you back your police does not exemp-
22 lify any real understanding of the problem.

23 MR. KRASOW: Well, nevertheless, the FBI Director would
24 be a critically important figure.

25 VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: And he will be a good man,

make no mistake about it.

MR. KRASLOW: Well, there have been various proposals in the Congress concerning the appointment of a successor when and if Mr. Hoover leaves. One bill would compel the President to select a successor from the ranks of the FBI. Another bill would make such an appointment subject to confirmation by the Senate.

What do you think of these proposals?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I will wait to see what they are. I do not believe in anticipating what the probabilities may be until they come before me.

MR. KRASLOW: They have been kicking around for several years.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Yes. And they have gotten no place.

MR. SPIVAK: Mr. Vice President, may I ask you a question: Mr. Nixon insists that the United States can't afford to accept a concept of parity with the Soviet Union on military weapons. What is your position on that? Do you agree that we must maintain a clear superiority?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Well, again, Mr. Nixon sets up straw men and hopes to knock them down. I must say that one of the most interesting debates I have witnessed thus far is Mr. Nixon on the matter of national security. Within a period of 24 hours he had a personal debate, one on which he declared

1 that there was a security gap which could develop into a sur-
2 vival gap, and then hastily last night Mr. Nixon decided he had
3 to give a speech on peace and on arms control. I thought
4 that discussion was quite interesting. I must say I did think
5 that Mr. Nixon's militaristic attitude seemed to have
6 won the debate. He was much more precise even though he was
7 much more misleading in that particular matter.

8 What we need, sir, is a defense establishment that
9 gives us security, and that security doesn't relate necessarily
10 to parity. It may relate to having something extra. What is
11 really needed is a balance of forces for our country, and
12 arms control agreements that give us security.

13 Now, all these words of superiority and parity, I
14 think, are words that are used to, really, arouse emotions.
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1 What the next President of the United States must do
2 is what this President has done and what President Kennedy did,
3 to see to it that our country has the means for adequate de-
4 fense, for deterrence, and to see to it that when it goes to the
5 bargaining table it has the strength that commands respect and
6 that is exactly what Hubert Humphrey as President of the United
7 States will do.

8 MR. SPIVAK: Before President Kennedy came to office, he
9 did argue that there was a serious missile gap which we didn't
10 find afterward. Do you think that there is a missile gap
11 today, or one that is likely to happen pretty soon?

12 VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Not one at all that endangers our
13 security. I think the facts are manifestly clear. We have a
14 preponderance of "missilry," today. We have a preponderance of
15 heavy aircraft, bombers, and of tactical aircraft. We are the
16 strongest nation in the world.

17 I do not believe, however, that having said that, that
18 you need to just pile on weapon after weapon in order to see
19 that you can have bigger figures.

20 We are not interested in statistics as much unless those
21 statistics reveal what the actual strength is, and the strength
22 of our nation today is tremendous. What we need to do is to slow
23 down the arms race, to halt it, if we can.

24 I think that Mr. Nixon's proposals are really irrespon-
25 sible. He talks about cutting the costs of government and yet

his own proposals on security would cost an extra \$50 billion, it is estimated.

Now, where are you going to get that \$50 billion and still have a balanced budget or still cut the federal budget?

I think he has to make up his mind just what he wants and I don't think he has.

MR. PERKINS: Mr. Vice President, there is a report --- and I would like to ask you if you can confirm or deny it for us --- that upon at least one occasion, and perhaps two occasions, you offered the vice presidential nomination to Governor Rockefeller.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Mr. Perkins, that is a report I have never heard about. I must say that Governor Rockefeller is a fine man and one of my good friends and I admire him greatly. I hope that he will be willing to serve in any government position if he should be called upon but I have no recollection of, and I don't recall that I ever did -- as a matter of fact, my recollections are very precise --

MR. PERKINS: That you did not offer it and did not consider that?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: That is correct.

MR. BAILEY: Mr. Vice President, if I could get back to the subject Mr. Steele was discussing, if there is one thing that does seem clear to those of us who have been traveling around the country this fall, it is that the races in this country are

1 more and more deeply divided.

2 Now, you have talked a good deal about the need for
3 racial reconciliation and trust and you criticized Mr. Nixon
4 for what you said was failing to show courage on this subject.

5 Now, beyond using the presidency in terms of moral leader-
6 ship, what, specifically, would you do if you became President,
7 to try to improve the racial climate in this country?

8 VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: The first thing we must do is to
9 get people to understand that when you help someone who may
10 be deprived or who may be in despair, or unemployed, that you
11 not only help that person, you help everybody. What has happen-
12 ed in America is this spreading of doubt and fear and sus-
13 picion which really gets primarily into the economics of our
14 country. Many of the people have been told, blue collar
15 white workers, that if the black man gets a job or if a
16 Spanish-speaking American gets a job that didn't have one,
17 that this threatens his job. Now, what we need to do is to
18 keep our economy growing so that there is room in this
19 economy for productive workers, and we also need to place
20 special emphasis upon seeing to it that those persons who have
21 been non-productive, who have been clients, so to speak, of
22 the state, welfare clients, become productive, become self-
23 respecting, productive tax-paying citizens. I believe when
24 people work together they tend to learn how to live together.
25 I believe that when you have recessions that divide people

from those that are employed and those that are unemployed, it exacerbates the racial tensions. So I will be practical about it. I will encourage training programs, education programs, job placement programs, calling upon the business community as we have, and the National Alliance of Businessmen, to see to it that people have a chance, and when people are at work they do live together and when children are at school, and good schools, they learn how to live together. So this is the practical politics that I would practice.

MR. STEELE: Mr. Vice President, as a potential President of the United States, I'd like to know what your attitude is toward so-called summit diplomacy. Would you be inclined to have an early meeting assuming it was agreeable with President deGaulle of France and the leaders of the Soviet Union, or do you think this is a problem more for a Secretary of State and at the professional diplomatic level? What would be your role in this personal diplomacy?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I tend to believe that a systematic series of summit meetings, both amongst our allies and even with our adversaries in the Soviet bloc, is desirable.

I happen to believe that because of the sensitivity of issues in these days that the President should meet with heads of state, but it ought to be clearly understood that some of these meetings are merely progress meetings; that you should not be expecting dramatic developments and I have outlined

that in a paper that I did on Europe, and also one on Eastern Europe. So I am prepared, and will be prepared, sir, by knowledge, information and background, to participate in what you might call meetings of heads of state. They are commonly called summit meetings.

MR. SPIVAK: Gentlemen, we have less than four minutes.

MR. KRASLOW: Mr. Vice President, you have made an impassioned plea today, as you have on many previous occasions, for a halt in the arms race or a reduction in what you call the balance of terror in American-Soviet relations.

How do you reconcile this, sir, with the decision to build the anti-ballistic missile, whose need has been questioned by many eminent authorities?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Well, we have done the research and development work on the anti-ballistic missile. It was felt necessary to do it because the Soviet Union had already completed that aspect of their program and had deployed some of those missiles.

MR. KRASLOW: The Congress had just voted construction funds.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: That is correct, and therefore, the next President of the United States should immediately contact the Soviet Union and try to get into the discussions on what we call the offensive and defensive missile situation, and I will so do that, before we start the deployment of the missiles.

MR. SPIVAK: Mr. Vice President, how important do you think it is for the Federal budget to be balanced? Do you consider that one of your major goals, to balance the budget?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I consider it a goal that ought to be looked to at least in terms of a period of time



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