

FOR THE HONORABLE HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

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HUBERT HUMPHREY INTERVIEWED

HUGH DOWNS: And rounding it out, Hubert Humphrey is going to be in our Washington studio in this half hour, just a few minutes from now, with "Today" Washington editor, Bill Monroe, whom you see at the left of your picture.

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DOWNS: Former Vice President Hubert Humphrey had a news conference in Washington yesterday in connection with a meeting of the Democratic Policy Council, and the Council, with Mr. Humphrey as chairman, is expected to hold hearings and issue statements on major issues on behalf of the Democrats.

While he was in Washington, we asked him to be with us this morning to talk about Vietnam policy and war protestors, among other topics.

Mr. Humphrey is there in the Washington studios now with "Today" Washington editor, Bill Monroe.

Gentlemen.

BILL MONROE: Good morning, Hugh.

Mr. Vice President.

HUBERT HUMPHREY: Good morning.

MONROE: You have said that you support the Nixon Administration's Vietnam policy in regard to withdrawing troops and in regard to lowering the level of combat. Are there points of difference which you have with that policy?

HUMPHREY: Well, I felt that those areas of the policy where the President seems to be moving in what I believe to be a program of disengagement, I surely want the support (sic). We want our President to succeed in bringing an end to American involvement in this struggle, and to do it in a workable and acceptable fashion.

I do support the withdrawal of troops. Of course, I would like to see that withdrawal on a systematic and an accelerated basis. And that means not to have our plan, our peace plan, subject to either the veto of the government of South Vietnam or the sporadic actions of the forces of North Vietnam.

I don't believe that that would be a very effective peace plan. Lowering the level of combat casualties and lowering the level of violence is obviously desirable, and I think President Nixon's battle orders have accomplished that.

Likewise, I have believed that we ought to insist upon broadening the base of the government in South Vietnam, because this struggle will have to be settled with a political solution. It is not to be accomplished by a military solution. I think that's been generally accepted by this Administration and the previous Administration.

And along with that, of course, I have always felt that we ought to press unceasingly for a cease-fire. This is the only way you're going to get a political solution, to get the new elections, to get the kind of political settlement which this troubled---which this troubled part of the world needs.

So, on balance, I've tried to give my help and support to the President. I truly want him to succeed in this. He is our President. He is the Commander-in-Chief, and in the areas where he's moving correctly, I'm going to help wherever I can. I'm not interested in a fight with the President. What I'm interested in is peace in Vietnam. And what I'm interested in is a program that will bring it about.

MONROE: Would you support a solution in Vietnam that had to do with our getting out, putting Saigon in charge of South Vietnam, and, therefore, opening up a risk that

Hanoi could eventually take over?

HUMPHREY: Well, there's always a risk, Bill. You cannot govern---you cannot guarantee the future of any country, unless you permanently want---unless you want to stay there permanently.

Now, this is one of the dangers that I see, that if you put up this fear syndrome that you've mentioned, that if we get out, that Saigon's in charge, then North Vietnam will take over. That means you'll never get out.

Now, what we have to do is what I think we're beginning--- which we're trying to do: to strengthen that government in South Vietnam. But I want to see its base broadened some, because it needs political stability and political strength, and to insist on the government of South Vietnam to take on more and more of these responsibilities for self-defense.

And they can do it. They have a million men under arms. But ultimately the problem in South Vietnam will have to be settled politically, and that means new elections. It means broadening the base of that government. And it also means, of course, strengthening the economy which we're perfectly willing to help do.

MONROE: In connection with the President's Vietnam speech the other night, as you know, Mr. Agnew has suggested that the networks should not follow a Presidential speech with analyses by their own correspondents, or by outside experts such as Mr. Harriman, if such analyses are going to contain critical remarks.

I wonder if you recall whether the networks followed this practice during the Johnson-Humphrey Administration and whether you think it's wrong?

HUMPHREY: Well, let me say that there is no one in power who likes to have criticism. And I mean, I served in public life a long time and I've complained to you fellows, the networks, and TV commentators and newsmen. This is inevitable because we always think when we're in public office that we're doing the best we can, and I'm sure that people try to do the best they can.

But the fact of the matter is that you must have in a free society the right to criticize, the right of commentary. And, of course, in our news dissemination, it is absolutely a key to a free society.

I think we have to recognize, Bill, that democracy is not an easy business. It's noisy; it's sometimes a little---

it lends itself to ferment and tension. It's always filled with criticism.

This is---Winston Churchill once said of democracy, it's the worst possible form of government except all others that have ever been tried. Now, this is just a way of saying that it's a difficult assignment. And if you're going to be in government in a free society, you have to be like Harry Truman used to say, "if you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen."

Now, there are a lot of people who are turning on the front burner on you all the time. And if you're in public office, you generally don't like it. But this is the price we pay for our freedom.

Imagine a society in which public officials commanded all of the media. Imagine a society, like our's, in which there was no competition of ideas over the network, and the television, and through our press. With this massive communication industry that we have today, with a President being able to command the networks and gain time whenever he wanted it, there would be no chance for a successful opposition.

So, I can't agree with Mr. Agnew's position at all.

I think that there were some things that he said that were meritorious. You know what I believe about that.

But I think that there is a tendency to overemphasize conflict in television. I think that there's too much of the news that is regionalized, in a sense, out of New York and Washington. I'd like to have you folks get acquainted with the rest of the country. And I think that there is a tendency at times to not give us as balanced a program as we might like.

But when you say that a commentator ought not to comment after a Presidential address, that's wrong. And when you say you ought to sort of get the mood of the country--- that television ought to get with it and see what the mood of the country is and then follow that mood---I say "God save us from that," because the mood of the country may be wrong.

One of the purposes of a free press is to challenge the mood of a country. Democracy is a form of---a system in which it is safe to have unpopular ideas. Let's just put it that way. If you can't have an unpopular idea in a free society and still survive and be permitted to state that idea, then there is no democracy.

So, I---I was really concerned over this---what I thought was an overkill, frankly, on dissent; an overkill on the part of the Administration on the TV and the media.

I don't always like what you do----I want to make it very clear. But I think when it comes from a high office, the highest offices in the land----that an attack----that this is something to be concerned about. I think it's very serious, and I don't think that we should stand by silently while some people try to silence what I consider to be legitimate dissent.

MONROE: May I ask you a question about politics, Mr. Humphrey?

Do you have any feeling that the present Administration is following what has been called a "Southern strategy," that they intend to build a coalition which will start out with Southern states as a base?

HUMPHREY: Well, I have heard that, and it appears to be so. But that has been very openly talked about, and I believe that part of the---some of the addresses of the Vice President and others are directed towards getting that, what we call, conservative group brought into the Republican fold.

This defies, however, and is contrary to what President Nixon talked about: "bringing us together." And I want to remind you that the President has said he wanted to bring us together. He asked us to speak a little more silently, to sort of not be too loud.

But at the same time that we're talking about bringing people together, there's a polarization taking place in this country by Administration comments, condemning people for their actions, challenging the media; speaking very loudly, I might say, in those instances.

So, I don't---I can't agree with either the Southern strategy----that's the terminology. What it really means is they're trying to bring together those elements in this country that are more conservative into one body politic.

And I can't agree with the contradictions that I see in the "togetherness" on the one hand, and the "get out" and "we don't like you" on the other hand.

MONROE: What about the polarization, the divisions, within the Democratic Party which were pretty fierce at the Convention a year and a half ago? Is there any reason to believe that they can be lessened, that unity can be created within the Democratic Party, particularly if Vietnam

remains an issue?

HUMPHREY: It's going to be a tough assignment. Very difficult.

We had our Policy Council meeting yesterday. We had people there of all shades of opinion. We had people from the so-called McCarthy faction, the Kennedy faction. We had Dr. John Kenneth Galbraith of the Americans for Democratic Action. We had Mr. Gainz(?). We had other people. And we had over---we had Governor McNair, and we had Congressman Wright. And we had myself and others. So there's a wide variety of opinion. And we got along well, as a matter of fact. We had an open discussion.

I would be less than honest though if I said that it's an easy assignment. It will be difficult. Our party represents what's going on in this country. There is ferment. There are---there is not a national consensus on some issues. We do have honest differences over Vietnam.

I disagree with some of my fellow Democrats over this. I don't think that we disagree over the desire for peace, or the willingness to work unceasingly for it. But I think that we disagree on some---maybe on some timetables, and on some details.

But that's what a political party's for, Bill. I

don't want to be a member of a monolith. I do not want to live in a country where it's not safe to be different. I always recall what John Kennedy once said about our mission in the world. He said that our purpose is to make the world safe for diversity. And here in America we must make our society safe for those who wish to be different.

Now, violence, no! You cannot advocate peace in a violent manner. You cannot be a peace worker and practice the politics of violence. The politics of nonviolence; the politics of peaceful protest; the politics of peaceful demonstration.

Now, who likes demonstrations?, I mean if you're in power, and even if you're not. But it's a form of petition. I want to emphasize that when you have marches, when you have parades, and sometimes there are people within them who cause great difficulty.

Nevertheless, this is what we call the right to petition for the redress of grievance. It is free speech. It is free press. It is freedom of assembly. And you can't have these freedoms and have everything neatly packaged and tied up in ribbons and no one ever getting out of step or out of line. It just doesn't work that way.

MONROE: Thank you very much former Vice President Hubert Humphrey.

Now back to Hugh in New York.

DOWNS: Our thanks to Mr. Humphrey and to Bill
Monroe.



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