

OPENING REMARKS BY
SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY, CHAIRMAN
THE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COUNCIL
6226 NEW SENATE OFFICE BUILDING

MAY 13, 1971

We meet today to resume the task of charting new directions for the Democratic Party in the 1970s.

As I emphasized at the last meeting of the Democratic Policy Council in late March, Richard Nixon must be defeated next year.

But his defeat cannot be accomplished by default, even though it appears -- at times -- that the Republicans are determined to limit their occupancy of the White House to four years.

The Democratic Party must win the Presidency in 1972; it is not sufficient simply for the Republicans to lose.

It is essential that we win through affirmative and positive effort. Across this country there are millions of Americans who watch the performance of the Nixon Administration with growing disillusionment . . . and who seriously doubt the capacity of our democratic system to deal with the problems that most directly affect their lives.

But today it is not just the poor and deprived who feel ignored and forgotten by their national leaders . . . this is now the lot of middle income wage earners, farmers, businessmen, young people, senior citizens, and blue collar workers.

To win the White House in 1972 will require that the Democratic Party address itself directly to the needs and aspirations of all those Americans who today regard the Nixon Presidency with growing despair and hopelessness.

The fact is: the American people are tired of hearing promises that are never kept. They are increasingly confused by the Nixonese -- that new lexicon of governmental language designed to cover a maze of shifting and contradictory policies on the domestic and foreign scene. And they are worn out by a seemingly endless flood of public relations gimmickry from the Nixon image-makers, everything from a phony county fair on the White House lawn to a guest shot on "Laugh In."

The times cry out for clear, direct, straight-from-the-shoulder talk about what must be done in this country . . . and how we can do it.

America needs new leadership, capable of bringing --

Reconciliation to a people who are today the victims of fear, of doubt and division;

Reconstruction to a Nation whose cities and rural countryside are deteriorating and plagued with problems of pollution, slums, and obsolescence;

Reaffirmation for a people who are questioning the values and the ideals of American life. Yes, reaffirmation of that noble goal of one nation, of a nation united in common purpose, dedicated to liberty and justice and opportunity for all.

This is the challenge and opportunity before the Democratic Policy Council as we continue building the foundation for the 1972 Party platform.

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Last week the Census Bureau reported what should shock even the most complacent among us -- a fact that ruthlessly strips away the cant and self-righteous posturing of the Nixon Administration's efforts to root out poverty in America.

The Census Bureau reported that for the first time in a decade, the number of persons living in poverty increased significantly.

During the 1960s the number of Americans living in poverty declined steadily at an average annual rate of almost 5 per cent. But in two years of the Nixon Administration this steady decline was dramatically reversed: in 1969-70, 1.2 million persons were added to the poverty population, an increase of five per cent.

In large measure this increase can be explained by Mr. Nixon's disastrous economic policies -- policies that in two years time almost doubled the unemployment rate of 3.3 per cent that Mr. Nixon inherited from the Democrats.

But unemployment is only a partial explanation: we must not overlook the frontal attack by the Nixon Administration on the Office of Economic Opportunity, or the record-high interest rates that destroyed thousands of small businesses and drove farmers into bankruptcy, or the withholding of billions of dollars voted by Congress for a variety of urgent public needs, or the Presidential veto that killed hundreds of thousands of public service jobs, or the cutbacks in vital education, health and training programs. All of these and other decisions -- made with cold calculation by the Nixon Administration -- combined to produce this shocking increase of persons living in poverty.

The Democratic Policy Council has a moral, we well as political, responsibility to speak out clearly on this matter -- to indict the Nixon Administration for this massive failure of executive leadership, and then to specify the steps that must be taken now to reverse this downward spiral.

Make no mistake: the survival of our democratic system may well be the issue in 1972 if we are unable to resume the steady march of millions of Americans out of poverty. Those of us who helped design the programs of the 1960s understood that even these were inadequate, that they were only beginnings pointing the way toward more adequate and comprehensive efforts by the public and private sectors. But we hoped that steady and visible results would give us time and opportunity to accelerate the rate of progress, to build on the foundations that had been laid.

Now, the Nixon Administration has sacrificed even the minimum level of success that had been achieved in the 1960s. And, in so doing, the Nixon Administration has lost the time and opportunity to finish the job.

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In these tragic circumstances, the Democratic Party must act, not just in behalf of those persons added to the poverty population in the past two years, or in behalf of those who never reached even what the government defines as "poverty". . . . No, the Democratic Party must act in behalf of every American because every American has a very direct and personal stake in the outcome of this struggle.

I believe the American people are ready to move forward once again.

I believe that too many persons seriously underestimate the readiness of the American people to respond to a national leadership of compassion and courage . . . a national leadership that calls forth the best instincts of the American people.

I believe the Democratic Party today faces an extraordinary opportunity to regain the leadership of this Nation . . . if we but summon the vision, and the dedication, to do the things that we know must be done . . . so that all of us in America will know the blessings of peace, freedom and happiness.

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SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY, CHAIRMAN

THE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COUNCIL

6226 NEW SENATE OFFICE BUILDING

MAY 13, 1971

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WE MEET TODAY TO RESUME THE TASK OF CHARTING NEW DIRECTIONS FOR THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY IN THE 1970s.

AS I EMPHASIZED AT THE LAST MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COUNCIL IN LATE MARCH, RICHARD NIXON MUST BE DEFEATED NEXT YEAR.

BUT HIS DEFEAT CANNOT BE ACCOMPLISHED BY DEFAULT, EVEN THOUGH IT APPEARS -- AT TIMES -- THAT THE REPUBLICANS ARE DETERMINED TO LIMIT THEIR OCCUPANCY OF THE WHITE HOUSE TO FOUR YEARS.

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY MUST WIN THE PRESIDENCY IN 1972; IT IS NOT SUFFICIENT SIMPLY FOR THE REPUBLICANS TO LOSE.

IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE WIN THROUGH AFFIRMATIVE AND POSITIVE EFFORT. ACROSS THIS COUNTRY THERE ARE MILLIONS OF AMERICANS WHO WATCH THE PERFORMANCE OF THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION WITH GROWING DISILLUSIONMENT . . . AND WHO SERIOUSLY DOUBT THE CAPACITY OF OUR DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS THAT MOST DIRECTLY AFFECT THEIR LIVES.

BUT TODAY IT IS NOT JUST THE POOR AND DEPRIVED WHO FEEL IGNORED AND FORGOTTEN BY THEIR NATIONAL LEADERS . . . THIS IS NOW THE LOT OF MIDDLE INCOME WAGE EARNERS, FARMERS, BUSINESSMEN, YOUNG PEOPLE, SENIOR CITIZENS, AND BLUE COLLAR WORKERS.

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TO WIN THE WHITE HOUSE IN 1972 WILL REQUIRE THAT
THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY ADDRESS ITSELF DIRECTLY TO THE
NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF ALL THOSE AMERICANS WHO TODAY
REGARD THE NIXON PRESIDENCY WITH GROWING DESPAIR AND
HOPELESSNESS.

THE FACT IS: THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE TIRED OF
HEARING PROMISES THAT ARE NEVER KEPT. THEY ARE INCREASINGLY
CONFUSED BY THE NIXONESE -- THAT NEW LEXICON OF
GOVERNMENTAL LANGUAGE DESIGNED TO COVER A MAZE OF
SHIFTING AND CONTRADICTIONARY POLICIES ON THE DOMESTIC AND
FOREIGN SCENE. AND THEY ARE WORN OUT BY A SEEMINGLY
ENDLESS FLOOD OF PUBLIC RELATIONS GIMMICKRY FROM THE
NIXON IMAGE-MAKERS, EVERYTHING FROM A PHONY COUNTY FAIR
ON THE WHITE HOUSE LAWN TO A GUEST SHOT ON "LAUGH IN."

THE TIMES CRY OUT FOR CLEAR, DIRECT, STRAIGHT-FROM-THE-SHOULDER TALK ABOUT WHAT MUST BE DONE IN THIS COUNTRY , , , AND HOW WE CAN DO IT,

AMERICA NEEDS NEW LEADERSHIP, CAPABLE OF BRINGING -- RECONCILIATION TO A PEOPLE WHO ARE TODAY THE VICTIMS OF FEAR, OF DOUBT AND DIVISION;

RECONSTRUCTION TO A NATION WHOSE CITIES AND RURAL COUNTRYSIDE ARE DETERIORATING AND PLAGUED WITH PROBLEMS OF POLLUTION, SLUMS, AND OBSOLESCENCE;

REAFFIRMATION FOR A PEOPLE WHO ARE QUESTIONING THE VALUES AND THE IDEALS OF AMERICAN LIFE. YES, REAFFIRMATION OF THAT NOBLE GOAL OF ONE NATION, OF A NATION UNITED IN COMMON PURPOSE, DEDICATED TO LIBERTY AND JUSTICE AND OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL.

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THIS IS THE CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY BEFORE THE
DEMOCRATIC POLICY COUNCIL AS WE CONTINUE BUILDING THE
FOUNDATION FOR THE 1972 PARTY PLATFORM.

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LAST WEEK THE CENSUS BUREAU REPORTED WHAT SHOULD
SHOCK EVEN THE MOST COMPLACENT AMONG US -- A FACT THAT
RUTHLESSLY STRIPS AWAY THE CANT AND SELF-RIGHTEOUS
POSTURING OF THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION'S EFFORTS TO ROOT
OUT POVERTY IN AMERICA.

THE CENSUS BUREAU REPORTED THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME
IN A DECADE, THE NUMBER OF PERSONS LIVING IN POVERTY
INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY.

DURING THE 1960S THE NUMBER OF AMERICANS LIVING IN POVERTY DECLINED STEADILY AT AN AVERAGE ANNUAL RATE OF ALMOST 5 PER CENT. BUT IN TWO YEARS OF THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION THIS STEADY DECLINE WAS DRAMATICALLY REVERSED: IN 1969-70, 1.2 MILLION PERSONS WERE ADDED TO THE POVERTY POPULATION, AN INCREASE OF FIVE PER CENT.

IN LARGE MEASURE THIS INCREASE CAN BE EXPLAINED BY MR. NIXON'S DISASTROUS ECONOMIC POLICIES -- POLICIES THAT IN TWO YEARS TIME ALMOST DOUBLED THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE OF 3.3 PER CENT THAT MR. NIXON INHERITED FROM THE DEMOCRATS.

BUT UNEMPLOYMENT IS ONLY A PARTIAL EXPLANATION: WE
MUST NOT OVERLOOK THE FRONTAL ATTACK BY THE NIXON
ADMINISTRATION ON THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY,
OR THE RECORD-HIGH INTEREST RATES THAT DESTROYED THOUSANDS
OF SMALL BUSINESSES AND DROVE FARMERS INTO BANKRUPTCY,
OR THE WITHHOLDING OF BILLIONS OF DOLLARS VOTED BY
CONGRESS FOR A VARIETY OF URGENT PUBLIC NEEDS, OR THE
PRESIDENTIAL VETO THAT KILLED HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF
PUBLIC SERVICE JOBS, OR THE CUTBACKS IN VITAL EDUCATION,
HEALTH AND TRAINING PROGRAMS. ALL OF THESE AND OTHER
DECISIONS -- MADE WITH COLD CALCULATION BY THE NIXON
ADMINISTRATION -- COMBINED TO PRODUCE THIS SHOCKING
INCREASE OF PERSONS LIVING IN POVERTY.

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THE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COUNCIL HAS A MORAL, AS WELL AS POLITICAL, RESPONSIBILITY TO SPEAK OUT CLEARLY ON THIS MATTER -- TO INDICT THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION FOR THIS MASSIVE FAILURE OF EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP, AND THEN TO SPECIFY THE STEPS THAT MUST BE TAKEN NOW TO REVERSE THIS DOWNWARD SPIRAL.

MAKE NO MISTAKE: THE SURVIVAL OF OUR DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM MAY WELL BE THE ISSUE IN 1972 IF WE ARE UNABLE TO RESUME THE STEADY MARCH OF MILLIONS OF AMERICANS OUT OF POVERTY. THOSE OF US WHO HELPED DESIGN THE PROGRAMS OF THE 1960S UNDERSTOOD THAT EVEN THESE WERE INADEQUATE, THAT THEY WERE ONLY BEGINNINGS POINTING THE WAY TOWARD MORE ADEQUATE AND COMPREHENSIVE EFFORTS BY THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS.

BUT WE HOPED THAT STEADY AND VISIBLE RESULTS WOULD GIVE
US TIME AND OPPORTUNITY TO ACCELERATE THE RATE OF PROGRESS,
TO BUILD ON THE FOUNDATIONS THAT HAD BEEN LAID.

Now, THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION HAS SACRIFICED EVEN
THE MINIMUM LEVEL OF SUCCESS THAT HAD BEEN ACHIEVED IN
THE 1960s. AND, IN SO DOING, THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION
HAS LOST THE TIME AND OPPORTUNITY TO FINISH THE JOB.

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IN THESE TRAGIC CIRCUMSTANCES, THE DEMOCRATIC
PARTY MUST ACT, NOT JUST IN BEHALF OF THOSE PERSONS
ADDED TO THE POVERTY POPULATION IN THE PAST TWO YEARS,
OR IN BEHALF OF THOSE WHO NEVER REACHED EVEN WHAT THE
GOVERNMENT DEFINES AS "POVERTY". . . .

NO, THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY MUST ACT IN BEHALF OF EVERY
AMERICAN BECAUSE EVERY AMERICAN HAS A VERY DIRECT AND
PERSONAL STAKE IN THE OUTCOME OF THIS STRUGGLE.

I BELIEVE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE READY TO MOVE
FORWARD ONCE AGAIN.

I BELIEVE THAT TOO MANY PERSONS SERIOUSLY UNDERESTIMATE
THE READINESS OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO RESPOND TO A
NATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF COMPASSION AND COURAGE . . . A
NATIONAL LEADERSHIP THAT CALLS FORTH THE BEST INSTINCTS
OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

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I BELIEVE THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY TODAY FACES AN
EXTRAORDINARY OPPORTUNITY TO REGAIN THE LEADERSHIP OF
THIS NATION . . . IF WE BUT SUMMON THE VISION, AND THE
DEDICATION, TO DO THE THINGS THAT WE KNOW MUST BE DONE . . .
SO THAT ALL OF US IN AMERICA WILL KNOW THE BLESSINGS OF
PEACE, FREEDOM AND HAPPINESS,

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