

*Make speech file
in this*

TEXT OF SENATOR HUMPHREY'S ADDRESS
TO STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, DULUTH

February 17, 1972

I want to share a few views with you and then we will have a rap session here where you can get at me. I think every citizen ought to have a right to take one bite out of a live United States Senator and I will give you that chance. In the meantime, I would like to share some thoughts with you.

When I came here somebody presented me with a little folder entitled 'The Liberal Coalition' and I am interested in that because that is the way we get things done. I want to talk to you about the liberal coalition. The liberal coalition consists of many elements in our society. It consists of people who no longer complain about things but get busy. People who are no longer outraged by the injustices that inflict us but do something about it. People that no longer just have good ideas but try to put good ideas to work. Might I say that to have government work the first thing you have to do is to elect people, because otherwise if you don't elect them it isn't going to work for you. There are only two kinds of government -- government of the majority and government of the minority. There are only two ways -- government by edict or government by representative process and young men and women today have the opportunity as never before to participate.

I have helped during my time to open up one party called the Democratic Party. I was a young Mayor of a city that took over at the time when it was corrupt -- indifferent to social need and with the help of men like Orville Freeman, Donald Frazier, Fritz Mondale, and others and myself, at that time their leader, we changed the politics of the city of Minneapolis. We went onto the United States Senate and we had a coalition.

We went on to the United States Senate and we had a coalition that built what we called the Democratic Farmer Labor Party. We didn't let any one group dominate it. We understood that what we thought were the elements of this state that wanted social progress, wanted progressivism, liberalism, not radicalism, constructive purpose, not destruction and we went ahead and proceeded to win some elections and get some things done. We saw the need for getting things done and the battle was long and it was difficult. I came to the United States Senate fighting for human rights, leading my party, yes dividing my party in fact.

In 1948 battling for the plank known as the Civil Rights plank, but going on to see President Truman win an election which they didn't think he could win and for 15 years I fought that battle in the Congress, 15 years introducing legislation until finally we were able to get a President who had commanded the attention of the American people, President Kennedy, and I worked alongside him as his legislative Lieutenant and today his closest personal friend, his one man that was at his hand and at his side all the time, Kenneth O'Donnell, of the state of Massachusetts who was John Kennedy's campaign manager, is my associate and my co-chairman in my efforts to win the Presidency at this time and there's a reason for it, because we worked together.

President Kennedy sent down to the Congress of the United States a month before his death the civil rights legislation that we'd worked for and I was privileged to be the floor manager for that bill, all of it, every bit of it. The debate started on the 20th day of February, it ended on the 26th day of June, there were over 200 roll calls and we broke a filibuster and we passed the most comprehensive piece of civil rights legislation that ever has passed in this country, and broke the back, may I say,

of segregation, thank God -- in America we were able to do it, and we got it done.

But let me tell you how we got it done. We got it done because we had people that were in the labor movement; some people downgrade today, that worked hard. We got people from the church organization, the spiritual religious groups. We got young people, freedom riders, people that had courage, the Civil Rights Leadership Conference, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and we worked together day and night and I was their legislative leader, and we produced. That was a coalition, that's what it takes to get things done.

Other things have happened. I noticed as I look across this audience and I am sure there are here some who are receiving student loans from the federal government. May I just immodestly suggest that it was my privilege to be the author of that legislation, and it didn't come easy. It took a long time, we introduced bill after bill and finally we made it, under the National Defense Education Act of which I was the co-author that made possible expanded educational opportunity for people in both public and private education.

We fought for the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps was a battle in this country. There were people that said it was idealistic, it was far out, that it was a way to avoid the draft, and so forth. That battle for the Peace Corps was fought in the primaries of 1959 and 1960 in Wisconsin, and when President Kennedy became President he took the bill that I had sponsored in '58 and together we developed it into a bill, I introduced it into the Senate, we had hearings for better than a year and we passed it; the Peace Corps has become one of the great instruments of our foreign policy for good. It took a coalition to get it done. Not one group, not somebody that had a sense of righteous purpose only but a coalition of people who knew how to make that political system work.

The same thing is true of the Job Corps, which put hundreds of thousands of young men and women on jobs. the Youth Opportunity Program of which I was the Chairman, it provided a million and one-half jobs for young people that were disadvantaged -- black and white, from the inner cities of America. It took work to get it done. 10 million youngsters given remedial education and recreational opportunity, 8,000 parks open, none of it with a single dollar out of the public treasury, it was done. And it took a coalition of people that were old, and young and black and white and Democrats and liberals and progressives. People who were willing to stand together under different political persuasions.

We introduced the OEO, the war on poverty, a war that has a long ways to go before it will ever be won, but I helped write that legislation, I stand aside for no one when it comes in the struggle to help those who have had a difficult time.

I am the author of VISTA, for volunteers in service to this country, working out in the great hinterlands of this land, on Indian Reservations and in the ghettos of our cities. I introduced and passed the legislation for the Department of Housing and Urban Development. I am the author of the Arms Control Agency, the Chairman of the Arms Control and Disarmament Subcommittee of the Senate for six years and when John Kennedy signed the Nuclear Test Treaty he asked me to go to Moscow to be one of the representatives of your government and my government in that ceremony, and when he signed that treaty in the White House he gave me the pen and he said Hubert, this pen belongs to you because this is your treaty ,

because I had worked since the days of Adlai Stevenson in 1956 when he said we could stop nuclear testing and we ought to stop it. And we put it together in a treaty and as your Vice President I travelled to Europe and negotiated the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to prevent the spread of nuclear weaponry technology.

I went to Mexico to sign the Protocol and the treaty to make Latin America a nuclear free zone which was again some of our legislation. I mention you these things because it took people to get it done, perseverance and patience and it also took a coalition of a broad coalition, people who are sometimes scolded today because they are supposed to be establishment, because they are the labor movement.

Let me tell this audience that nothing will be done in this country for social progress unless you have the working people of this country on your side. Unless you have the labor movement with its powerful political organization. You can't get it done with just a good idea, you got to back it with the kind of political performance that it takes to get things done. This is how we got the Food Stamp Program. I authored that program, ladies and gentlemen. This is how we got Food for Peace. I authored that program, my friends. This is how we got Medicare. I introduced that bill on the 17th of May, 1949, and it didn't become law until 1965. We fought for it every year, reintroduced it every Congress, battled and held the hearings to get medical and hospital care for senior citizens, and if I have my way, we'll have national health insurance, we'll have Medicare for the kids, just as we have medicare for the elderly: why not, we can afford it in this country and we ought to do it.

Now these are things that can be done and more can be done, and let me tell you why we've got to do more. There are great needs in this country. Our cities are rotting from within and yet that's where many of our people live. But many of the people that are being left in the city are black and poor and many others that are leaving are white and well to do. But I am not going to settle for seeing the American city become a ghetto, and a prison for poor people.

I'm calling upon young people that say they are idealistic, that say they are liberals, that say they want to change this country. I call upon you to help change it, to mobilize the resources of this country for a massive program of rebuilding the cities of America so that those cities stay decent places in which to live, safe neighborhoods, good homes, law and protection on the streets, all that is needed for a decent life so that people can live together in harmony.

Instead of talking about some esoteric subject, let's talk about people and their jobs, they need work, not relief, not food stamps, not welfare. The average citizen in this country needs work and constructive work at decent pay. We need to open up the political process, not with tokenism, not one young person, not one black and one woman, but bring into the Cabinet and the courts and the agencies of the government qualified women by the hundreds, qualified blacks by the hundreds, qualified young people by the hundreds, and I'll help get it done, ladies and gentlemen. I know how to do it.

Let's talk about the pollution, not just the pollution of the air and the water. I introduced the first Water Pollution Control bill in the United States, along with a Congressman from this District in 1956. It was only a beginning, it was a seed to be planted and we never really got around to it, you know. Pollution issue didn't become one until an astronaut looked down on this earth satellite that we live on and saw it

cloaked in smog and until there was a great survey made of the water resources of this country and we began to find out that within the next 30 years we'd run out of fresh water, then suddenly a shock came to us.

But what's the pollution that really corrupts America and destroys it. Not just air - you can at least put a mask on for dirty air, and you can at least drop a chlorine tablet in filtered water and still survive, but the pollution that's really of concern and the pollution that spreads a disease throughout this land is the pollution of bitterness and hatred and racism and segregation and intolerance which grips vast areas of America and that's where you come in. You're young, you're new in the business. Your parents and grandparents have fixed attitudes, many of them, but you don't and I say that this country will never be one nation, it will never be a country with liberty and justice unless we learn how to live together.

Now if we can forgive our enemies of World War II, which we have, the Japanese and Germans, and others, and thank God we have, I hope that we'll forgive anyone; can't we learn how to live together, can't we reconcile our difference, can't we open up our neighborhoods so that if a man wants to buy a home he can live there if he has the money, if he has the income. Can't we have a government policy where black people are treated as well as white people, or Chicanos are treated as well as somebody else, or is it always going to be that some people have to be at the back of the line if not at the back of the bus. I am the man that is not going to stand for that in my public life, because let me tell you unless this country starts to learn to respect the quality of the people's character rather than to look upon the color of their skin, there is no hope for us.

The best days of America will be when we start to judge people as people, not black and white, not whether or not they're protestant, catholic or Jew, or whatever their religion or non-religion, but what is their talent, what is their quality, what can they do and I have put a lifetime of work in trying to get this across to the American people.

Now let me conclude my remarks by this. I speak not only, I act. I say to you that rhetoric is cheap but performance is difficult. The legislation I've talked to you about isn't something we've talked about. It was accomplished. The senior citizen homes in this country are legislation as a result of a man standing before you. I had my share of that responsibility and I can go down the legislative record from the day that I was mayor of my city with the first Human Relations Council in the United States, with the first award of the National Conference of Christians and Jews for our efforts to try to clean up the cities, to this very hour.

I've introduced legislation in this Congress for planning in our country, a program of National Growth and Development, legislation for government accountability, legislation if you please to hold accountable the great agencies of this government in national security, a Joint Committee on National Security, and we can get it done. To introduce the bill is easy, to pass it is difficult. I've asked those that work for me to try to live by what we say our standards are. I have a campaign committee in this state and I'd just like to have you note the man who is its chairman is Bill McGrann, age 34. His assistant, Mary Conover, 25. His coordinator, John Sarnoff, a labor leader with the United Automobile Workers, 35. The Director of Delegates, Mary Bremner, 27; youth organizer, Larry Myer, 22; Jack Lavoy, representative from this state, 25. Paul Ridgeway, youth coordinator, 23, from St. Cloud State College; Larry Knolls, student at Armstrong High School, age 15; Carrie Moffins, age 24; Allen Page, 27; my national campaign manager, age 37; the director of the entire delegate operation, Dorothy Lyon, a woman; the director of advance, followup and organizational structure, Ursula Culver.

We believe in women's rights. I've heard about all this. Listen, I'm a co-sponsor of the Equal Rights Amendment. I'm the author of legislation to ban every form of discrimination based upon sex, and believe me give me a chance and it will be done. And I say these things because I've heard some of the nonsense that's been peddled. I take a back seat for no one when it comes to progressive social policy in this country. I have fought for the sick, the poor, the handicapped, the young, the old, the black, the minorities; I led the fight in this country on nuclear testing and arms control, when you couldn't find a corporal's guard to stand up in the Senate, now I hear people come by about a new coalition. Well where the hell were they when we needed them right in the beginning, that's what I want to know. Where were they when the fight was really going on? Let me assure you it doesn't take much guts to be for civil rights today. It doesn't take much guts to be for arms control today.

I was against the ASI deployment before people were spelling it out in Congress. I've been fighting for these things the whole public life and I'm going to continue to fight, and I want to say to those that wish to challenge that record, you better be prepared, because I'm prepared to defend the record of public service on behalf of the American people, not without blemish, because I'm a human being, surely not a saint, but I come before you with a record of accomplishment and I come to you with a vision of tomorrow, where we can bring young people into government, where we can do something about the environment that is ours today that is polluted both physically and spiritually, where we can rebuild our cities, where we can put master plans of rebuilding the physical plant of this country, where we can open up the political channels.

Who do you think appointed the McGovern Commission? Who do you think was responsible for the selection of Fred Harris as chairman of the Democratic National Committee? Who do you think advocated an end of the unit rule? Well take a look, he's here, right here in front of you and when I hear about these great reforms, when I hear about them, we sponsored them. I asked George McGovern to take on that job. I knew him before many of you in this room. I recruited him for American politics and he's a decent and good man and I admire him and respect him but let the record be clear, the McGovern Commission is not an accident, it came out of the convention of 1968 because some of us asked for it and when I was a titular leader of my party I saw that it was implemented and that the Democratic National Committee implemented it across the length and breadth of this land. These are the records my friends. Now let me have your questions. Thank you.

University of Minnesota--Duluth

February 17, 1972

June is less than four months away and four million young people are getting set to graduate from high schools and colleges.

What's the outlook for these four million--for those of you here today--for your brothers and sisters about to graduate from highschool?

The short answer is "grim"--as grim as last summer. And last summer was the worst for high school graduates in a decade--the worst for college graduates in a generation.

In some fields the job situation is catastrophic. This June nearly 250,000 young people--diplomas in hand--will be looking for teaching jobs with little more than 115,000 slots available.

And official of the National Education Association said: "This is the worst time in history for the teaching profession in terms of jobs. Colleges and universities will have to turn off the faucets."

Where will the more than 100,000 young people who can't find teaching jobs this year go? If they move into other fields, as many universities are urging them to do, they may be jumping out of the frying pan into the fire.

A Michigan State University Survey of 346 employers in business, industry and government warned of a ^{further} 2 percent drop in demand for men and women with bachelors' degrees--last year hirings for BA. holders dropped 26 percent--a 12 percent drop for masters' and a 27 percent drop for Ph.D.'s.

Not only are jobs in short supply--but all of you looking for jobs this June are going to have to scramble harder to get them.

There will be fewer recruiters on campuses this year and the lines will be long to see the few who do show up.

These are somber figures and facts. Unemployment among the four million young Americans graduating this June will be a very special kind of tragedy for them and for the country.

It means that some of you will be unable to launch careers for which you have planned and worked and saved.

And it means that the community in which you planned to work and live will be deprived of your contribution.

This doesn't have to be so.

There is no reason for some of you to be without jobs this June.

There is no reason for white teenage unemployment to be 18% and black teenage unemployment to be at more than 30 percent.

There is no reason for the nation's most valuable and productive resources--it's young--to be jobless or to be at work in jobs for which they are overskilled or undereducated.

We are a great nation of massive wants crying for attention.

We need new schools, hospitals, clinics, parks and good housing.

And in the face of these wants, more than five million Americans are idle.

I say this is wrong. And all of us must do something about it.

What can we do?

I believe we must elect men and women who are committed to change--men and women who are committed to full employment with jobs--not full employment with promises.

It is clear to me that those who lead us today seem to be willing to stand by while your education goes to waste, while families with an unemployed person lose their homes and while our economy falls deeper into recession.

And the only way that you can work to change those who lead and govern this nation is to register, to organize and to vote.

You cannot sit back and complain about unemployment, about injustice and about priorities that need to be ~~changed~~ ^{reordered}.

To have a government in Washington truly committed to the needs of people should be the aim of all Americans. And in order to have such an administration, all of you must realize that the young cannot do this alone.

You must join with older Americans.

You must join with the hidden youth of America--those young Americans not in college but in factories, on farms or in the service.

And you must join with working people who share with you your concern that we have a productive economy.

This is the key to change America for what it must be in the coming decade.

In his last undelivered speech, John Kennedy said:

Let us not quarrel amongst ourselves when our nation's future is at stake. Let us stand together with renewed confidence in our cause united in the heritage of the past and our hopes for the future--and determined that this land we love shall lead all mankind into new frontiers of peace and understanding.

This is our goal and it is up to young Americans to help this nation move forward again.



Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



www.mnhs.org