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PLATFORM PROPOSALS

OF

SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

Today, perhaps more surely than at any other time in the past 40 years, we are faced with a crisis of confidence in our governmental institutions--

--A crisis of confidence in the believability and integrity of government;

--A crisis of confidence in our government's willingness to understand the everyday problems and needs of people;

--And most important of all, a crisis of confidence in the ability of government to act.

This very week, a respected national survey reported a precipitous rise in the feelings of alienation among the American people over the past few years.

On Monday, the Harris Survey reported a sharp increase in the number of Americans who believe that the people running the country don't really care what happens to the average American or what the average American thinks.

Most shocking of all, nearly 70% of those interviewed expressed the belief that they were living in a political, social and economic system in which, inevitably, "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer."

We are faced with a situation of rising anger, discontent, fear, frustration, raw group hostility and widespread hopelessness.

Either we confront and deal with the root causes of these dangerous symptoms or the very foundations of the institutions which have made this country great will be threatened.

And the compelling reality of American politics places an awesome share of the responsibility for confronting these problems upon this relatively modest-sized group assembled here today. For the fact of the matter is that throughout our nation only one national political party has consistently fought for the average citizen of this country. And that party, the Democratic Party,

stands today as the only effective national force to deal with the fundamental problems we face.

We are faced with a task of serious and historical proportions.

It is the obligation of this committee, our convention, and the Party to fulfill that mandate effectively.

What are some of the elements in this crisis of confidence?

It's a war that doesn't end.

It's a wife whose husband has been a prisoner of war for six years.

It's cities rotting from within.

It's a society in which our elderly feel neglected, the middle aged feel ignored, and the young feel ineffective.

It's a man with a family without a job wondering how he will pay the rent.

It's a child in a land of plenty going to bed hungry.

It's a tax system which is unfair.

It's a retired person counting out her pennies to pay for an inadequate diet in a society which too often says life is over at age 65.

It's the fear of getting sick because it costs too much to get well.

It's the thousands of kids standing on street corners, getting into trouble, going on drugs because they can't find work.

It's the young worker too often invisible and too often forgotten by a country that says a college education is the only way to get ahead.

It's millions of men and women working in our mines and factories under unsafe and hazardous conditions because of a government that lacks the compassion and courage to enforce job safety laws.

It's the family that is afraid to take an evening walk together.

All this need not be.

We have the ability and the resources to change things, and shape the conditions which affect our lives.

To do so we need only the will and commitment to act. And, we must chart a course to give us direction.

This is our work today.

No testimony in this brief time can adequately detail what must be done. In a separate statement, I am presenting to this committee a comprehensive program of action.

Now let me highlight a few of these areas.

Our first order of business is to end the war in Vietnam.

In 1972 the Democratic Party must prepare a platform which sets an immediate deadline for the complete withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam, and the termination of all U.S. military operations in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia contingent upon the release of American prisoners of war and an accounting of our personnel missing in action. We must persistently pursue a ceasefire throughout all Indochina using every possible diplomatic channel including the use of the United Nations.

After more than a decade of U.S. military assistance, it is clear that we have more than fulfilled any commitment to South Vietnam.

With a commitment to ending our military operations in Indochina should come a parallel commitment to a comprehensive review of American defense posture. The goals of this analysis should be:

--Review all American commitments to determine which of those remain in our national interest.

--Reduce American bases overseas.

--Thin down our top heavy command structure and increase the proportion of effective combat troops to support troops.

--Establish a long term defense plan to provide for U.S. national security and at the same time enhance U.S. foreign policy.

--Maximize and modernize the efficiency of our armed forces and our total defense capabilities.

--Reform acquisition and procurement procedures to reduce enormous cost overruns and improve competition for defense contracts

--Concentrate on the pursuit of armaments limitations and disarmament agreed upon by nuclear and non-nuclear powers

This review must take place before detailed budget decisions can be made. Our defense budget can take reductions. There is waste and duplication. I have previously suggested that reasonable reductions that would not impair our defense capabilities would be in the range of \$12 billion. This figure has also been recommended by the Brookings Institutions. Cuts beyond this range without comparable reductions in the Soviet Union's defense structure would not be realistic nor responsible.

The Democratic Party has an obligation to establish the programs and policies that will put Americans back to work and our nation back on its feet. The Nixon economic policies have given the American people the highest unemployment in a decade, the highest inflation rate in two decades, the highest budget deficits in four decades, the highest trade deficits in eight decades and the highest interest rate in 100 years. Combined, these Republican economic failures have brought hardship and tragedy to millions of American families.

The goal of the Democratic Party must be the creation of jobs and meaningful work. The right to a job must become an accepted economic and social principle. That 5 percent unemployment or 4 million Americans without jobs is acceptable must be totally rejected by the party which represents the working families of this nation.

I have submitted proposals to the Committee calling for the creation of at least a one million job public service employment program, a special youth employment program, retention of the investment tax credit and the creation of programs to deal with unemployment among highly skilled persons.

Jobs are one half of the economic equation.

Controlling inflation is the other half.

We must have a price and wage stabilization mechanism that is fair, efficient and an advocate of the public interest--not a rubber stamp for corporate business. Stiff prosecution for price violators and price rollbacks where necessary are important components of a fair economic policy.

Fairness must also be carried to our tax system.

The American Tax system is rigged against the working families of this country.

Because we have reduced Federal income taxes in recent years, the regressive payroll, sales and property taxes have taken larger and larger amounts from the taxable incomes of working families.

The middle-income families are being increasingly taxed with regressive payroll and sales taxes while giant corporations and the privileged few escape paying their fair share.

Since the Nixon Administration has blatantly refused to endorse tax reform this year, our party has a special obligation to make a firm and realistic commitment to tax reform.

At a minimum, the essentials of the Democratic Party's tax reform program must be:

--Review the tax code with the objective of eliminating those special tax privileges which permit the wealthy few and the giant corporations to avoid paying their fair share.

--By closing tax loopholes we can make available funds to local areas to reduce substantially the homeowner's property tax burden

--Revising the social security system to cut payroll taxes

--Simplification of all tax forms and procedures

--Elimination of Federal tax liability for those people with poverty level incomes.

--Creation of a tax structure which will not inhibit investment or limit the incentive to earn.

An extra effort must be made to create a progressive tax system at every level of government.

A progressive tax structure is not only fair but it can be used to achieve a more equitable distribution of income among all Americans. The increasingly regressive nature of the American tax structure is leading to unfair concentration of wealth and a growing tax burden on middle income persons.

Another goal of our party must be an effective reform of the public assistance system.

We must have a welfare system that treats recipients and taxpayers fairly. To do this we must scrap the present system and recognize welfare as a national problem demanding national answers and national financing.

Here is what I believe we must do to assure that compassionate aid for those in need is provided.

- Federalize the cost of welfare.

--Set uniform eligibility standards and provide a basic level of assistance for those in need.

--Maintain the incentive to work by providing jobs and job training along with the establishment of a suitable work requirement for recipients.

--Establish a nationwide system of child day care and development centers and conduct an extensive effort to broaden the food stamp program to every county in America.

--Begin an effort to lift 5 million elderly Americans out of poverty through increases in the Social Security and Old Age Assistance programs.

I am opposed to substituting a vast national income redistribution scheme for a truly effective and progressive public assistance program.

To aid those in need must be our goal. I do not believe that in order to achieve this goal we must provide all Americans--regardless of their wealth--with an income grant.

To adopt a program of income grants for all Americans to insure assistance for those in need is unnecessary. It will substantially increase the tax burden for middle income Americans and will be a serious liability to the Democratic Party.

Finally, the platform of the Democratic Party would be tragically deficient if it ignored the needs of 70 percent of the people living in urban and suburban America.

It should be the goal of this platform to focus on street level government, to maintain the integrity of neighborhoods, to establish certain basic services for our cities, to provide new financing mechanisms and to plan the use of our resources through a National Growth and Development Policy.

I have offered a detailed plan and legislative program which includes a well funded revenue sharing program and a National Domestic Development Bank to enable cities and communities to move ahead on a wide range of urgently needed public construction funded by long term loans.

We can't solve the problems of this country without solving the problems of urban America. And, the difficulties confronting urban America are due in part to the mass migration of rural Americans to the urban areas. The Democratic party must commit itself to the revitalization of rural and urban America. They are inseparable. There is no relief for one without help for the other. We simply must move towards an urban-rural balance.

And part of this commitment must include a willingness to use planning to meet our future needs. The Democratic Party Platform must outline the creation of structures and policies in Congress, the Executive Branch and at all levels of government that will enable us to better shape and give direction to our national growth.

Let me be brutally frank.

The Democratic Party today stands in its most precarious position since the days of Franklin Roosevelt. A Republican opposition, alternately fanning and feeding upon, the frustrations of the American people stands ready and actively poised to decimate the Democratic coalition.

And make no mistake about what this means.

Permanent Republican dominance in this country means not only an end to meaningful progress in the humanization of life in America: it means, in many important areas, "turning the clock back."

We have already had that experience.

To those who did not believe this in 1968, I cite merely Mr. Nixon's appointments to the Supreme Court, or what has happened to America during the past three-and-one-half years in the area of jobs, aid-to-the-cities, and help to the poor and under-privileged.

Permanent Republican dominance means government permanently fastened to the interests of the privileged few.

It means government of the big money, by the big money, and for the big money.

It means a society in which the rich get more and the rest of us get less. It means a widening gap between private affluence and public poverty.

It means a society in which public services will fail to keep pace with public needs.

And let us not forget the devastating implications for many Americans of another four years of Republican rule.

Many well educated, middle class Democrats may well have the capabilities, skills and potential income to gracefully absorb the implications of a seemingly "glorious," ideologically-inspired defeat at the hands of the Republicans. But millions of other less fortunate Americans do not.

For while some affluent Democrats will be able to ride out another four years of Republican rule, the cost to millions of other fellow citizens will be painfully high and to many, irremediable.

To some, four more years of Republican rule may mean a lifetime debility due to the loss of a chance to participate in the Headstart Program, or the loss of an opportunity for higher education.

For some, Nixon Republican rule will mean unemployment where there could have been a job. . .and for others, Republican rule could even mean the absence of adequate sustenance where there could have been income.

To ensure our success in the face of this threat, the Democratic Party and its platform committee must remember that the strength of the Democratic Party since the days of Franklin

Roosevelt has resided in our ability to put together coalitions which form majorities.

This is the necessary, inevitable, and unending arithmetic of democracy.

We have been able to pass legislation in civil rights, aid to the poor and needy, legislation in health care, education and housing, legislation for youth in need and the elderly, for cities and for the farmer, only because we have been a broad coalition party. . .and not the party of any single, narrow, ideological, social or political elite.

Every voting survey of the past 30 years has clearly demonstrated that the underlying basis of Democratic strength in America--indeed, the very reason, why we have been the majority party and the Republicans have long been reduced to minority status--is that the Democratic Party has been viewed by a majority of Americans as the party which represents the average American working family.

And this much is clear: If the Democratic Party falls into the hands of any narrow, ideological elite; if it focuses its concern on matters of interest to only a handful of the privileged or if it neglects the day-to-day concerns of the many, then the long and scrupulously planned, "emerging Republican majority" may well be upon us.

I have spent a lifetime fighting the forces of reaction in this country, and I will fight with all my strength to prevent this from happening.

We have all fought too long and hard for progress and human dignity in America to allow this country to be enveloped by the forces of reaction, racism and privilege.

I hope that the platform committee approaches its serious deliberations with these considerations very much in mind.

Thank you.



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