

OPENING REMARKS BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY  
DNC VICE PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION COMMISSION HEARINGS

November 7, 1973

At few times in the history of the United States have events and personal misfortunes combined to create the present high level of interest in the method we use to select our Vice Presidents. I would venture to guess that only during the consideration of the 12th Amendment to the Constitution in 1803-04, and during the times at which Vice Presidents have abruptly been made President because of the death of the President, has the selection process for the Vice Presidency been much more than a footnote in our history and political science.

That is, until now. In particular because of his role as Commander in Chief in this time of rapid communications, instant war, nuclear weaponry and competing ideologies, the qualifications of the President's successor have become matters of urgent national attention.

The death of FDR, the Eisenhower heart attacks, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and the resignation of Spiro T. Agnew have permanently set to rest the assumption that the Vice Presidency could be left to chance.

The United States today is without a Vice President during a period of mounting challenge to the authority, and even the continuance in office, of the President.

As Chairman of this Commission, I have refrained from stating my own recommendations and preferences regarding the Vice-Presidential selection process until we have heard from all interested parties.

Nevertheless, I point out the two paramount questions which are before this Commission in our deliberations:

1. How do we assure that the best man becomes the nominee for Vice President, that is, the man best qualified to be President of the United States should the Presidency be vacated and to be an effective member of the Presidential nominee's administration?

2. How do we assure a process for selecting the Vice President which provides for full participation by Democratic voters or their representatives in the selection and a process in which the American voter and citizen generally will have enduring confidence?

This hearing of the Vice Presidential Selection Commission of the Democratic National Committee is convened to hear recommendations for possible reform of the method for selecting the Democratic Vice Presidential nominee.

This Commission was ordered created on August 9, 1972, by the DNC and at the suggestion of one of our members, the

Honorable Endicott Peabody, a former Governor of Massachusetts. Members of this Commission were named last spring and the Commission held an organizational meeting in Washington, D.C. on June 20, 1973. Subsequently, an Executive Committee appointed by the Commission has formally met twice.

Whether to hold public hearings in our research was left to the discretion of members of the Commission from each state. Such hearings have been held in New Orleans at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association and in Boston and New Hampshire.

However, this Commission has not attempted to rely on public hearings. We have been in touch by mail with state chairmen, state vice-chairmen, national committeemen and committeewomen, county chairmen, Democratic youth leaders, and 1972 Democratic National Convention Delegates.

We have also been in touch by mail or by published announcements with the officers or membership of such organizations as the Political Women's Caucus, the National Organization of Women, the League of Women Voters, organized labor, Americans for Democratic Action, the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, Common Cause and others. The information, suggestions, and recommendations received in all these ways

will be examined by members of the Commission before a report is adopted.

It is our tentative plan to schedule a meeting of the full Commission at the end of this month or early in December so that it may receive a report from the executive committee. It is expected the Commission will approve a final report to be submitted to the Democratic National Committee, according to our instructions, before the end of 1973.

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