

POLITICS: NATIONAL

Synopsis of remarks by Hubert H. Humphrey, Drake Law School, Des Moines, Iowa, April 11, 1970.

SUBJECT: Political Participation and Reform

QUOTES:

ON "DOING YOUR OWN THING": "John Adams referred to this personal involvement ... as 'the spirit of public happiness - a spirit which is reflected in the life of the people, in participation in public discussion and public action.'"

ON CONGRESS: "Can we deny that congress is unresponsive to the public interest -- that it discourages individuals from taking part -- when it takes seventeen years to pass medical care for the aged? Can we deny this when programs to provide economic opportunity are always funded after the defense budget is settled? Must we continue to choose congressional committee chairman solely on the basis of seniority? Or do we have the wisdom to find a better way?"

ON UNIVERSITIES: "Let us face what is happening -- our universities are in crisis. We do ourselves no service either by trying to ignore this crisis, by dismissing it as the work of trouble-makers, or by failing to note how far the role of the American University has strayed in the past years.... A university cannot survive in violence, turmoil, and an atmosphere of intolerance. It cannot be allowed to become a physical battleground. Above all else -- we must preserve it as an arena for the pursuit of truth. We must preserve the 'ruthless examination of realities' -- however painful that may be -- if we are to have any hope of mastering the larger dangers to society, and to man's place in it."

REFORMS:

-- Granting eighteen year-olds the right to vote in Federal and state elections;

-- A national election holiday;

-- A national election commission to insure fairness in all elections;

-- A program of national registration for all eligible voters;

-- The elimination of all vestiges of voting discrimination based on race through the extension of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 now pending before the Congress; and

-- The election of president and vice-president by direct

popular vote; and

-- A council of social advisors analogous to the council of economic advisors.

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In a Democratic system, criticism is healthy, indeed, it is essential to the process of self-government. A measure of discontent is the fuel for change and growth. But there is another side to the equation, as well. We must be equally candid -- equally forthright -- in recognizing the progress that is achieved. If our Democratic system is to remain healthy, the people themselves must retain their faith in the system's ability to achieve the fundamental goals we set for ourselves.

In a brief quarter century we have travelled farther in fulfilling our nation's ideal and promise than in any other period of our history.

Yet a spiritual isolation is possible in today's world that was hardly possible in a less organized, less technological age. Science and technology may have made the world into a global village, but a neighborhood to be a community must become a brotherhood. Man today is farther removed from the fruits of his labors than ever before -- and his unhappiness in the face of economic success has shown that material comforts alone do not guarantee a satisfying and rewarding life. Crowded by multitudes, yet he feels lonely. Flooded by goods and things, he thirsts for happiness.

The threat of nuclear war; the draft; the rising rates of crime and violence; fear of impoverishment through illness; and the rapid changes in all aspects of our public and private lives -- these are shocks that few men in any age have had to bear so continuously and relentlessly.

Is it any wonder that so many of our people retreat into conformity -- and reject the new freedom that our material achievements seem to offer? Is it any wonder that many of those who oppose what they call the "system" also tend to conform to inflexible social patterns and "systems" of their own? There is

uncertainty in freedom -- and uncertainty few of us are equipped to handle -- freedom demands the daring of an explorer and the dedication of a patriot.

But there is an alternative -- one that can give individuals greater meaning in their lives and, at the same time, preserve the essence of Democracy.

This alternative is found in a single word: participation -- a challenge to our democratic system no less than the one posed by the great depression.

Some will say that this is too simple and obvious. Perhaps. But the undeniable fact is that in today's world the chance to take part in society and government is limited indeed. The forms of participation have expanded manyfold, as barriers preventing access to social and political institutions have been lowered. More people vote; more people go to college; more people are able to travel and communicate with others. Yet the substance of participation -- a sense of being able to have a say in what happens -- seems to have remained the province of a very few. The question remains, how can the powerless share in power? How can the governed give their consent or exercise their right or dissent?

We need first to gain a more accurate view of the individual's role in our mass society. Few of us can be satisfied if we are continually judging ourselves -- and being judged -- by standards encompassing two-hundred million people, and it may be difficult to find meaning in what we do, if only certain problems or activities are said to be worthwhile or glamorous -- or if we take too seriously that "where the action is" we aren't and perhaps rightly so.

Just yesterday, it seems, the nation's attention was focused on racial injustice; then it is Vietnam and the urban crises; yet now we discover that popular attention is focused on the crises of our environment. Indeed, as the focus of mass attention has shifted, many activities of great importance -- such

as the search for racial justice -- no longer attract the popular interest and commitment needed to continue and finish the job.

Today it has become popular to talk of "doing your own thing". At worst, this is an effort to abdicate from social responsibility, to "drop out", or to obscure the hard work of social change beneath simple slogans.

But at best, "doing your own thing" is a healthy development, urging each person to develop his own sense of personal worth -- his own commitment and involvement. It is ironic that this idea should be cherished as though it were new. For it surely is not. On the contrary, it is the highest expression of all our efforts, in two centuries of American political and social development. This is what we have always been about as a nation. John Adams referred to this personal involvement -- "~~doing your own thing~~" -- as "~~the spirit of public happiness~~" -- a spirit which is reflected in the life of the people, in participation in public discussion and public action." He described this spirit of public happiness as "a joy in American citizenship, in self government, in self control, in self discipline, in dedication."

We need to channel the development of individual integrity into activities at the level of families.....neighborhoods....communities. What we do at home may not make headlines, but it should make for greater personal happiness, as well as greater fulfillment and tranquility for us all.

We need a renewed awareness that true freedom comes not from withdrawing from society, but from taking part -- Democracy is not self-executing. We have to make it work. It is the people's business and the people must take care of their enterprise. We need to remember with Justice Holmes that "every calling is great when greatly pursued."

And like it or not, individuals must act through institutions much of the time. And there are few institutions more pervasive than government and politics. The role they play is the key to the individuals' ability to take part in Democracy. Only through access to our representative institutions -- to the political process -- can each one of us be guaranteed our right to help chart the future course of our country. Only in this way will we have a real say in decisions that most intimately affect the course of our lives. There is no party, no executive, no cabinet or legislature, wise enough to govern without constant exposure to informed criticism. Freedom is hammered out on the anvil of discussion, debate, and dissent, which ultimately yields to a decision that can be supported by the public.

This will require some reform, if we are to insure access, equal participation and effectiveness. Starting with the political parties, we need to improve the method of delegate selection, and to modernize the rules and procedures of national party conventions.

The nomination of a president: and the adoption of a platform are too important to be the result of a process that is unrepresentative, undemocratic, or unfair.

The vitality of the political process also demands the removal of every unnecessary barrier to exercising the franchise, including:

- Granting eighteen year-olds the right to vote in Federal and state elections;
- A national election holiday;
- A national election commission to insure fairness in all elections;
- A program of national registration for all eligible voters;
- The elimination of all vestiges of voting discrimination based on race through the extension of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 now pending before the Congress; and
- The election of president and vice-president by direct popular vote.

The processes of Democratic politics must not be restricted to those who have the wealth, the time, the education and the opportunity for political participation. Everyone -- the worker, the housewife, the student -- must have an equal chance to take part.

We must change -- yes, clean up -- the method of financing political parties. Whether through tax credits, deductions, or general revenues from the U.S. Treasury, we must eliminate special privilege, corruption, and suspicion from the multi-million dollar business of running for public office. Television stations should make free time available to all qualified candidates on airwaves owned by the public.

The process of revitalizing politics must not stop here. Ineffective government is also a source of frustration, and produces increasing resistance to the intrusion of bureaucracy in our private lives.

We must face some harsh truths about the congress and our state legislatures. ~~Can we deny that congress is unresponsive to the public interest -- that it discourages individuals from taking part -- when it takes seventeen years to pass medical care for the aged?~~ Can we deny this when ~~programs to provide economic opportunity are always funded after the defense budget is settled?~~ Must we continue to choose ~~congressional committee chairman solely on the basis of seniority?~~ Or do we have the wisdom to find a better way?/

The executive branch of the government, as well, must be made to respond more quickly to current problems and concerns of our people, and must have a more systematic approach to long-range planning. In the President's office, for example, ~~we need a council of social advisors analogous to the council of economic advisors.~~ Just as the latter seeks to inform and advise the President and the congress on all economic matters, so the council of social advisors would act in areas of social and environmental concern -- including housing, health, education, civil rights, crime, welfare and poverty. And this capacity for judgement and decision is needed at every level of government -- Federal, State and local.

We need to preserve and develop those institutions of American life that have long made this their goal -- from the grade school to the university. We must help them liberate man through the ability to think.

Today, however, at least one of these institutions, the American University, is under attack.

After more than two years of strife, we have a chance to see what has been happening on the campus.

At many colleges, the response of students, teachers, and administrators has been admirable: they have questioned the place of the university in society: reformed governing procedures; and re-created the sense of a university community.

But elsewhere, teachers have retreated pell-mell before the first serious questioning of their beliefs in a generation. Some have adopted positions of blind rigidity; others have joined in the parroting of meaningless slogans, or have tolerated students who disrupted classes out of fear for their own prejudices. In the community at large, this polarization would be undesirable; in the university, it is intolerable.

university in crisis

Let us face what is happening -- our universities are in crisis. We do ourselves no service either by trying to ignore this crisis, by dismissing it as the work of trouble-makers, or by failing to note how far the role of the American University has strayed in the past years.

First we must ask: what should the universities do? How is their work related to the future of America? We have always expected them to bring intelligence to bear in defining, fostering, and carrying on the values of civilization, and to use those values to ensure that the rational process serves human ends.

In recent years, we have also asked our universities to take an active part in applying values. We have demanded that the ivory tower come to the market place, without losing the characteristics of

either. Inevitably, these two functions have now come into conflict.

A new generation of students is rejecting the functional role of the university in providing skilled people for predetermined slots in society, instead of trying to reshape it.

They reject values in society that place more emphasis on the university degrees a man holds than what he is. They resent an education that is directed more toward the credentials of a B.A. or a Ph. D. than an understanding and appreciation of life.

These students challenge the ability of an educational institution to reconsider values -- ~~the why of civilization and society~~ -- when research is sponsored by government and corporation, and when many of the best teachers find outside work and prestige in the very institutions whose role and purpose is being most severely scrutinized.

In recent years, for example, the universities have provided valuable help to the Federal government. But in too many cases, professors have succumbed to Potomac fever; instead of bringing to Washington the best that our universities have to offer, they have carried back to the classroom the tired attitudes and barren issues of the bureaucracy. Is it any wonder that students often rebel against teachers who spend more time on junkets for the government or industry than they do in questioning the directions and purposes of our society?

This conflict is made even more difficult to resolve by the demand of the students themselves that universities be actively involved in day-to-day events through educational standards that are more "relevant" to society's needs. But we must strike a careful balance between a university's direct involvement in reshaping society and its function in

analysing society's problems and carrying on the rigorous search for truth.

Involvement will necessarily influence the forms and content of criticism, blunting its cutting edge with the inevitable compromises of involvement.

But if we fail to maintain these standards -- this intellectual approach -- then we will risk having no process -- no habits and traditions of inquiry -- to apply to problems yet unseen. Education will then become no more than a form of on-the-job training.

However we resolve this conflict, we must of course preserve the existence of the universities themselves. It is simply fantasy to believe that destroying or crippling a university -- whether by student violence or intellectual timidity on the part of professors -- will change society, itself.

Destroying the university will merely end all hopes for improving society at large. And it will end traditions of thought and action that are necessary if change is not to be aimless and arid. As the president of Yale University, Kingman Brewster, has said:

"Even the most noble purpose cannot justify
destroying the university as a safe haven for
the ruthless examination of realities."

I agree with President Brewster. A university cannot survive in violence, turmoil, and an atmosphere of intolerance. It cannot be allowed to become a physical battleground. Above all else -- we must preserve it as an arena for the pursuit of truth. We must preserve the

~~"ruthless examination of realities"~~ --- ~~however painful that may be~~ --
if we are to have any hope of mastering the larger dangers to society,
and to man's place in it. 7

Finally, the threat posed to the university illustrates an important element of taking part in Democracy -- that it also involves responsibilities, including the responsibility to pursue change in an orderly fashion.

Indeed, this is the essence of a free society -- to balance the rights conferred on each man with what he is asked to do in return. In a community, this is the only way in which we can make true freedom possible -- for everyone.

We ~~demand that all citizens obey the law~~ -- and we pride ourselves that we are a nation of laws, and not of arbitrary power. But this responsibility can have moral force only if the laws are made by a process that is open to all our people, and are enforced impartially, with fairness and justice.

The rule of law is today under attack -- from both the right and the left; in the courtroom and on the streets. We cannot permit either extreme to destroy the orderly processes of law and the administration of justice -- or there will be no justice for anyone. We must take our stand for the due process of law the surest bulwark for individual liberties ever developed. Those who violate that due process -- or disrupt the orderly proceedings of the courts, whether from the judge's bench or the courtroom floor -- weaken and destroy the very institution which best protects the individual and his rights.

But we must insure that our law-making and law-enforcing procedures

serve the interests of all individuals.

Only when we insure that rights are equally conferred will we be fully justified in demanding that responsibilities be equally met. This is what true participation in a democracy is really about.

In sum, we must look critically at the needs of the 1970's and honestly evaluate the ability of our existing governmental structures to meet those needs. ~~I am convinced that many changes are now overdue. We must find the wisdom and courage to make them.~~

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Synopsis of remarks from 3rd District DFL Fundraiser, May23, 1970.

SUBJECT: Indictment of Nixon administration failures in regards to Cambodia, economy, inability to instill any national political confidence, the fueling of hostility and violence.

Challenge to DFL to accept call for desperately needed leadership.

QUOTES:

ON NIXON ADMINISTRATION: "America is like a ship, storm tossed on turbulent seas. At a time when the captain should be in charge and giving directions and steering a steady course, he stays in the captain's cabin, closing out his officers. His first mate charges from one end of the ship to the other criticising, condemning and provoking mutiny, and irritating an already distraught and unhappy crew."

"Our nation is in deep trouble. No longer can this administration blame its troubles, the nation's troubles, on its predecessors. Any administration that has been in power 16 months must assume responsibility/"

ON CAMBODIA: "Cambodia has not only expanded a war that we should be ending, but it has provoked a wave of bitterness, frustration and violence that threatens the very life of our country. At a time when we should be healing our wounds and opening the gates of opportunity to more and more people, we have an administration that opens new wounds of expanded conflict, of economic recession, of racial bitterness, of student dissatisfaction.

ON NEED FOR LEADERSHIP: "Our country cries out for leadership of vision. It not only needs tactical, sound, economic and social policy, it needs above all a call to greatness, a message to pull us together as one nation - indivisible - not tear us apart. The Democratic Party has not only an opportunity to win an election this year, but it has a responsibility to win in a way that will revive the nation's spirit, lift our morale and put us once more on the course of social and economic progress."

DFL PROGRAM:

"What is our program?

"To end the war in Vietnam by speedy, systematic, responsible disengagement and withdrawal...To get out of Vietnam...

"To end the recession and the economic downturn...

"To end the bitter rhetoric that echoes from highplaces - -condemning press, students, dissidents, and those who seek constructive change. ..

"To end violence on our streets and on our campuses... The violence must stop, the killing must stop, the hate must be uprooted and once again every American must look at his fellow American and must renew his commitment to

DFL PROGRAM continued:

one nation under God with Liberty and Justice for all...

"To end the pollution not only of the air, the water and the earth, but to end the pollution of our minds and spirits as a result of racism, segregation, poverty and illiteracy...

"It is a big order, but our cause is great. Our mighty nation needs great leadership."



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