

Telephone interview by Gilbert Harrison
w/ HHH

Hubert Humphrey
July 28, 1964
(Telephone)

H: In talking with the President himself of course the three most vulnerable areas are the South, the Midwest, and what he calls the ethnics what we call the ethnic groups. But let's see where does Humphrey fit in on that. Well as I indicated to the President and others have no one can help the President in the South besides himself, he is a Southerner and he will have to carry that himself. And myself I read all the polls that have been taken I don't show to be any drag on the President in that area. I think that the conduct of the Civil Rights Bill indicated that--didn't lend itself to any acrimony or any bitterness--on the contrary there was a good deal of good will and good feeling as far as the detail of the picture in Washington plus the fact much of the South is agricultural and this fits into what I consider my--if I have any expertise or any competence in two fields--in any fields--I'd say these two--the whole subject of conservation and agriculture and foreign policy are areas in which I specialize. And I have a perfect voting record as far as the South is concerned agricultural problems and there's not only a voting record but as one of the authors of the food for peace programs, school lunch hot programs legislation I think I could talk to these people. There are some bridges. Now in the Midwest where the President feels really some problem because of the basic conservatism, again I am a Midwesterner, I've had tre-

mendous support in the Midwest even in 1960. I think I have something to offer there because of my knowledge of that part of America and the agricultural economy as well as the developing type of industrial economy. And the same with this area of the Western states, where the identity despite the fact that I come from a non-mountainous state of Minnesota that I've worked continuously in the fields of public power and reclamation and water conservation and water resources, all of which is life and death to these people. The only other point that I feel--there are two points that one might make here on this is that I was up and talked

the other day at the request of Mr. Farley?

I was in New York, he called me over and asked me to drop by and we got to talking about this religious issue and the way it was opened up, he said to me, "Well, how're you doing?" and I said, "Well, I've been trying to work hard and do a good job as Senator," "He said "You've done a good job as Senator, but I mean how're you doing on this job of Vice Presidency?" I said "I haven't been doing much about it. I felt that the best thing I could do was to demonstrate my competence as a legislator and give a good accounting of myself in terms of the South as well as the manner in which those results were achieved" and I said, "Let me ask you some questions. What do you think will be the case if Miller is on the ticket (this was before the

Republican Convention--Miller being Catholic,~~xxxx~~
~~xxxx~~ and all. He said, "Well, first of all, nobody
 really knows he's a Catholic, but of course that ~~will~~
 be brought out if it has to be. ^{If} It has to be identified
 that has a liability to ~~it~~ rather than an asset. Secondly,
 I've been in New York politics all my life--the main
 trouble ~~up~~ in this state is that we constantly place
 religion ethnic groups race so we've got a jungle
 up here in politics--there isn't anything
 good any more. Whenever we had a Catholic judge we
 had to replace him. If we had an Irishman we had to
 replace him. If we had an Italian we had to replace
 him. So finally the whole party is just destroyed
 and fractured on the issues of religion and race and
 ethnic groups. I do not want to see the Democratic
 Party go through that? nationally. ~~and~~ I'm for you
 for Vice President and I want you to know that and I
 think the Democratic Party will be making a terrible
 mistake to let itself into the feeling now that it
 always had to balance the ticket religiously. We
 proved that we could overcome the religious area
 in this country and we did it as Democrats. ~~Thatx~~
 Let's not that decision by now trying
 to play petty politics with it from here on out." So
 much for that.

M G: Is this what you meant by the "ethnic"?

H: Now the ~~xx~~ ethnic group as I say is like the Poles,

the Italians and the religions. But here seems to me to be the answer to this one. If you put an Irishman on as a Catholic, you don't necessarily get the Polish and the Italian.--If you try to appeal on the basis of just religion--but what you need to do to appeal to these people is in terms of their ^{integration} interest in immigration, their interest in jobs, their interest in better living and I think that this was Franklin Roosevelt's touch with them--he didn't appeal to them on the basis of religion or on the basis that they were Italians and such. He appealed to them on the basis that ^{look here} I fight for you to get a better work week, to get a better job, a better social security, a better place in which to live. If there's anyone group that really responds to the liberal challenge in American society today it is the lower income groups in the work force.

GH: What are we going to do about what relates to this problem of the Vice Presidency, about the private studies that have been made in ^{places like} Michigan and Minnesota that do indicate that these areas in the cities --these minority groups, Polish, etc., Italian, there is no question about the white backlash.

H; That's right

GH: I spent all my hardearned money on this house and by God You know--

H; It just seems to me that if you let people have

their own alternative that we're going to lose this election--by that I mean with this group--with this Polish-Italian--just to mention those two groups--on the basis of the Negro question, because they are worried. They've got all their little savings in a piece of property --we've had demonstrable evidence --now the only other way that you can stop that is to give them some other alternatives--after all,--we've not now fighting a vacuum. We've got a ~~campaign~~ campaign against a man who's for the right-to-work law. We've got a campaign against a man who ~~is for the~~ has branded every trade union in the country for all practical purposes as corrupt. We've got a campaign against a fellow that really believes in low wages. And I think we have to put the social and economic issues out so damn hard that it gives these fellows something to think about and then to make it crystal clear that this civil rights movement isn't a threat to your life--in fact it upgrades your life. That's a harder job. The idealistic job is more difficult but I think that the big mistake that was made in Milwaukee and I saw it, and I saw it again in Baltimore and talked to Danny Brewster about it, ~~He~~ I said, "Danny, when you're over talking to those workers in Baltimore you don't argue civil rights--you just point out that Wallace goddam him all he wants to do is to take those jobs down to Mississippi and Alabama. He's really up

here, if he gets his way he has the candidate for President, he'll move industry into the low wage area-- into the non-union area. This is a fellow that never has stood up for the worker's rights. We could certainly make that clear. Now as far as Goldwater is

concerned, I think there's one other issue above all that's going to frighten these people, and that is peace and war. By God as much as man doesn't want to have a Negro moving next door to him, which he thinks maybe Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey might force on him, he doesn't want to have a man that's got itchy fingers on the nuclear trigger, because nobody will be living next door.

GH: That's right. Tjhat's one of the reasons why I haven't been as worried as some people about the political consequences of the ~~deterioration~~ deterioration of Vietnam because the only answer to that Goldwater has is get more into it.

H: Exactly. And I want to say that the one prevailing view that I get when I talk to just ordinary people like my little maid that came in here last night when I worked late up here, she said "Don't you think Mr. Goldwater will push into war?" k the taxibab drivers, but I was out home during the Republican Convention, I'm in a county that's predominantly Republican, and one after another, when would say "My God that fellow will get us into war." Now the people do not want a

war and Goldwater's answers to all these difficult problems the pace is to accelerate the dagger point. I think the Democrats are just--for the first time our party is not going to be characterized as a war party and--remember what Eisenhower did as a peace man. He didn't talk~~xx~~ about going to Korea to step up the war. He talked about going to Korea to end the war and Goldwater doesn't talk about going to Vietnam to ease it off or to contain? the war, he talks about cutting grass off with nuclear bombs.

GH: First of all, do you think that there is now a really sizeable element in the Democratic Party, primarily in the big cities, that is the East plus Chicago and so on, that are actively pushing for Bobby Kennedy?

H: Yes. I think so. I think Bobby has got a tremendous following simply on the basis of name and also on the basis of his own contact with leaders. I think everybody ought to recognize that in the three years that President Kennedy was with us, Bobby was so instrumental in his political fortunes that a number of the Kennedy people that are very loyal to Bobby were elected into key party positions.

GH: Some people have even said to me that the only real Democratic organization there is in the country is the Kennedy organization.

H: To some degree. But I say that most people in party politics are fully conscious of the power of

the President and I've always been one of those that indicated to the President that the Party will do just about what he wants to do if he knows what he wants us to do.

GH: Now the other thing is the role of labor unions. Are they really going to be firm--you remember this is a question we discussed in the very beginning. Are they going to be sort of "anything you say, boss"?

H: No, I don't think so. I think the labor movement -- I just had one of their men here, Dave Macdonald? just left this office before I called you--I think first of all the labor movement has been -- privately between us and not for any--George Meaney went over this with the President and told him in no uncertain words that he was for Hubert Humphrey and not only was he but he felt that 90 percent of all the officers of his local and international support.

GH: You will try one other thing. which has been raised as a strong argument for you; namely that the President quite clearly is going to continue performing like an intelligent Eisenhower. He is the Great White Father and he stands for unity, harmony, peace

H: I wanted to come to that--that's what I was talking with Dave about here a while ago. The labor movement number one has got to get aroused. It cannot let the defection take place in its ranks--it has to hate the

ugly specter of what the opposition really means. And this opposition is cool and relentless. Somebody's got to be able to get out and fire up the troops.

Because what happens with fanatical ~~xxxx~~

in the Goldwater camp is they terrify and frighten ~~x~~ our

~~xxxxx~~ people apathy on the one hand

some people say "Oh my God he couldn't win", and two,

a kind of terror and fear that strikes through the

ranks because of the viciousness of the attack. Well,

I think that the Administration is going to need some

articulate spokesmen and going to need a Vice Presi-

dential candidate that can go on out and rally the

forces and number one, ~~that~~ ~~xxx~~ has been identified with this

program. We cannot run away from the Kennedy-Johnson

program. This is our program, and we can't run away

from the Roosevelt-Truman-Stevenson-Kennedy tradition.

GH: Isn't it a question that the Attorney General

all good
and ~~xxx~~/Democrats will campaign ?

H: Not a bit--as a matter of fact I can say that

my relationship with the Attorney General and his

people are very good. If you were to ask Larry

O'Brien and Kenny O'Donnell who they're for they'd

say, well, of course, they're for Bob Kennedy and

they ought to be because they came up with him, but

if you say, well who are you for second, they'd say

Humphrey.



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