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REMARKS OF
VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
TO THE
COUNCIL OF LAKE ERIE PORTS

Statler-Hilton Hotel
Washington, D. C.
February 7, 1967

As I look over this audience rather quickly, I see a number of good friends from organizations representing the ports in all the Great Lakes states.

I wanted to come to this meeting because I think it is long overdue. I know that many of you have given years of your private and public lives to the development of those great water resources known as the Great Lakes.

This body of water is possibly the most valuable earthly possession that this country has. No nation on the face of the earth is blessed with such a mass of fresh water as are we in the United States and our sister nation to the north, Canada.

The Great Lakes have been a bond of friendship between our two great nations, rather than a source of rivalry or antagonism or tension. This friendship represents what we are trying to get other people in the world to think about, a great region where you can have mutual cooperation and mutual development for the benefit of all. Every place that our diplomats visit, or wherever our President travels, or wherever any of our people go, we always remind our friends in other parts of the world that they should find ways to join together with their neighbors.

The Mekong River project is one example. Or, consider the Jordan River development. We go from one end of the world to the other and suggest, "Now, if you could just get your hands close to a bit of water, whether it is a river, or a lake, or a watershed, you can find something that will hold you together and, in a sense, almost compel you to work together for the common good."

That's what the Great Lakes have been, a stream of friendship for eternity between two great Nations, and two great peoples.

Now Divine Providence blessed us with this great and valuable resource of the Great Lakes, and, speaking frankly, we haven't taken very good care of it.

It is like a man who has been blessed with good health all his life and seems to think that somehow or another it will always be that way. Only when he finds that the blessing of good health is fast leaving him does he remember the warnings he should have heeded and the precautions he should have taken.

Well, that is what is happening with us and the Great Lakes. This incredible resource of fresh water is something that never can be replaced, and yet for many purposes it can be destroyed in the decades ahead. And I mean in just a few decades, unless we take mighty good care of it.

I must say in front of my hosts, the Council of Lake Erie Ports, that one of the real tragedies of America is the pollution of that beautiful lake, and of others. We can't let that happen, and we don't need to let it happen. Now we must begin to reverse the destruction of our lakes and rivers, even though it will take many, many years to see any success or any real accomplishment. And cleaning up polluted waters will take the talents and perseverance and cooperation of everyone--industry, local, state and federal governments, and dedicated individuals like yourselves.

The Vice President has been chosen, by Act of Congress, to be the Chairman of the Council on Marine Resources, Engineering and Development, the field commonly known as oceanography. Now most oceanographic work previously has been directed toward the open seas, towards the vast oceans.

But, as the Chairman of the Council, I directed, this past week, that we start to concentrate our attention also on the Great Lakes. Now, all our activities in oceanography--including pollution abatement, increasing our fish resources and improving transportation--will be directed towards the Great Lakes as well as towards the oceans.

Now a few words about transportation. As all of you well know, transportation has become one of the primary considerations of this Government, and it is

surely a primary consideration in the cost of industrial and consumer products. I think it is for this reason, because of this great concern over distribution and transportation in the modern economy, that we have elevated transportation from just an ordinary word to one with a capital "T" and cabinet status.

This within itself tells its own story. Transportation is so fundamental that it stands right alongside of Defense and of Treasury and of the other great departments of government as a matter of vital concern to the people of this Republic.

As this new Department of Transportation develops, both in structure and purpose, the Great Lakes are going to be an integral part of its thinking. For example, the St. Lawrence Seaway is high on the list of priority concerns of the Department of Transportation.

Secretary Boyd is a strong supporter of the Seaway. I know that because I spoke with him about it last night. He understands the importance of the development of this Seaway not only for today, but for the years ahead.

This is the commitment of the President of the United States, who voted for that Seaway. This is the commitment of the Vice President of the United States. I am not going to forget my heritage, and I am not going to forget the immense value of these great bodies of water known as the Great Lakes, this great St. Lawrence Seaway, and that great heartland of America which I think represents the future of this Nation.

But I must speak quite candidly. The fact is that over a long period of time, those of you, and all of us in the Great Lakes area, have not joined together enough to foster our common goals. It is no secret that other areas of our country long ago combined their energies, and their collective public and private interests, to enhance the welfare of their particular area, and thus indirectly the welfare of the entire country. But while they did so, we enjoyed such great Teutonic-Nordic independence

that we almost killed each other off.

I remember what my father told me once, as a boy. He said, "You are not nearly as smart as you think you are, son, so I advise you to work a little bit harder than anybody else so that you can stay even." I've tried to do that and, anyway, when you are "number two" you always have to try harder.

So it is very gratifying to me to see you trying harder, too; to see that at long last there is an effort being made to organize the shipping groups, the ports, the terminals and the other public and private interests of the Great Lakes to take effective action in support of transportation and other policies relating to the Lakes.

We are taking a very important step here, in this meeting this morning, and I know that you are going to continue.

Additionally, as you know, there has been a lack of effective liaison with Congress. Now I just give you this word of advice: Don't make a single move that you do not bring to the attention of your Representatives in the Congress. The Congress of the United States is a mighty potent body, and it ultimately formulates United States policies on transportation, water resources, recreation and the St. Lawrence Seaway. The President can lead, the Executive branch can administer, but ultimately the Congress will have its way. I spent 16 years there and I haven't forgotten that great privilege. I am one who is very proud of the Congress.

The Great Lakes area Representatives and Senators are men who should be brought into your councils. They want to know more. They want to work with you. And what we need to do for the good of this Nation today is to get this group of men working together on the same wave length, making the adjustments that are necessary to achieve a common policy.

Compromises will be required. You know you can't just do everything for the Port of Duluth and forget all about all the other ports. Or, you can't do everything

for Lake Superior and forget the other Lakes. (I speak of the area that was closest to my constituency at one time.)

We have to learn how to work together, and how to give a little, and how to adjust ourselves to the needs of other groups. I am pleased, therefore, to see that the public and private groups in the Great Lakes states are awakening to the full potential of cooperative action in areas of common concern.

Now you are here to think ahead. Let me then, for the remaining three or four moments, challenge you to look ahead in transportation and in other fields concerning the Great Lakes.

Last week I heard Thomas J. Watson of International Business Machines speak about the future. He pointed out that because of automation and increased productivity in most industries, the work week by 1980 may be down to 27 hours. In the year 2000 it will be 22 hours. He projected figures for the elderly, or those who used to be called elderly. They will be retiring, no longer at age 65, but at a much earlier age.

Then, he asked, what will we do with that extra time? I never heard a man give a more profound speech, as he pointed out the importance of looking ahead for productive and constructive living in the year 2000.

Most of the people in the audiences that I talk to today, gentlemen, are going to be alive in the year 2000. And if we are worth our salt, as individuals and as a Nation, we will be thinking about the year 2000.

Well, what is it going to be like on the Great Lakes in the year 2000? What kind of Lakes are we going to have? What is going to be on those shore lines? Do you know that the greatest population and industrial growth in the last third of the 20th Century are projected for the Great Lakes region?

How much recreational area are we going to have for all those people

with all that leisure time? What is going to be done about transportation? What about the fish life? What about the need to keep the Great Lakes water level where it needs to be?

What about our relations with our neighbors to the North, our Canadian friends? And what about the Seaway? How can we best jointly plan for the day when waterborne traffic exceeds the capacity of the Welland ship canal or the Sault Sainte Marie locks?

I wonder if we are thinking far enough ahead. I wonder if we are really planning the kind of economic and social development, the kind of infrastructure, the kind of public and private organizations that we will require.

I hope you will consider these questions, think about them and write down some of your thoughts. I hope that you will combine your efforts, and send to me, as your Vice President, a memorandum, or a series of them, on the long-range problems of the Great Lakes, particularly those of an international nature.

I will see to it that those recommendations get into the channels of this government where it counts, so that your observations and recommendations are given first-class, top-level consideration.

There can be no truly representative, responsible government unless it is also a listening government. We want to listen to you. My door is always open, and I try to keep my mind open, too, so that I can learn and be of help to you.

I want to thank you for inviting me, and I hope that your work and your efforts today bear fruit. Building the Great Lakes region means building the United States and it means building cooperation with our Canadian neighbors.

I can think of few things more important today.

Thank you very much.



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