

HON. HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

American Labor Politics

Extension of Remarks of Hon. Hubert H. Humphrey

of Minnesota

in the

Senate of the United States

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EXTENSION OF REMARKS

OF

HON. HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

OF MINNESOTA

Mr. HUMPHREY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the Appendix of the RECORD an address delivered by me before the sixty-eighth annual convention of the American Federation of Labor, on October 3, 1949, at St. Paul, Minn.

There being no objection, the address was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Mr. Green, officers, and members of the American Federation of Labor, my friends, I welcome you enthusiastically to our beautiful State and to the inspiring, historical city of St. Paul. I welcome you here even though I fully appreciate the risk I take in exposing the beauty and wonders of our community to your eyes and experience. I know that after spending a few days in our pleasant Commonwealth, you will be sorely tempted to leave what is now your homes and migrate to our midst. Should that be your wish, I assure you that our building trades are perfectly capable of providing all the homes you require and our merchants will supply you with all of the necessities of life. We have 3,000,000 enlightened, hard-hitting, aggressive, understanding people in our State. We welcome you.

My role here today, however, is more than that of a greeter. I have a second function to perform and some troublesome thoughts on my mind. I come to talk to you about a job which needs to be done—a job which the Eighty-first Congress has not yet done and a job which is vital if you are to feel secure as members of free trade-unions, and if the American people are to feel secure with their liberties.

Labor's rights are no longer secure merely through the process of collective bargaining. The rules of collective bargaining and the rights and privileges of organized labor are now the subject of legislation and the subject of political determination. Politics, effective political participation must go hand in hand with the growth and the development and the maintenance of a strong labor movement in America. No one is asking anyone any longer in this country of ours "Are you interested in politics?" The simple fact is you are either interested in it or somebody is going to take the very interest out of you by political action. Labor can never gain its objectives when the rules of collective bargaining are stacked against them and the umpire and the referee are already bought off and paid off. The Taft-Hartley Act has destroyed the neutrality of government in labor-management relation-

ship. The Taft-Hartley Act says to every American worker that no matter how you may fight, no matter how just is your cause, the orders are stacked against you and you haven't got a chance to ultimately win.

There is a volume of evidence coming to Washington these days demonstrating that the Taft-Hartley Act is crippling the growth of the union movement, particularly in the South and in some of the other areas of this country where union membership is not as strong as it is in the industrial East and in the industrial centers of the Midwest and far West.

I say this without fear of any successful contradiction, there will not be any labor-management peace in this country until this grossly unfair antilabor legislation is removed from the statute books. There can be no labor-management peace until the economic relationships between labor and management are no longer settled by the general counsel of the National Labor Relations Board, but are settled around the conference table between employers and employees.

Now, let's move along to this other part of the labor movement program. We need—when I say "we" I mean every American—needs and welcomes an aggressive, constructive political action program on the part of organized labor. To hear some people talk and to read the writings of some editorial commentators, one would think it was against the law for a man that carries a union card to even be interested in politics. For years and years in this country the molders of public opinion, the powers that be who managed the political machines and the major political parties have told the folks in labor, "You just kind of keep out of our way. We will run this whole thing for you."

They have operated it pretty well, but not for you. They have operated it in behalf of management, of their political organizations. They have too often been what is called the political bosses.

Now, I say we need a constructive and an aggressive political-action policy on the part of labor. But I want to make my position quite clear, because all too often we think of these political policies at top level strategy. Make it crystal clear in your own minds that elections are not won in Washington, D. C. They are lost there, but they are not won there.

Elections are not won by top strategy. If that had been the case there would have been a lot of difference in the last election. There was lots of top brass strategy. Unfortunately not enough hard work, for some people at least, where it needed to be done.

Elections are won by hard work and by active participation in every voting precinct in this country. The essentials of a successful political campaign—and I know my friend Joseph Keenan is interested in this—the es-

entials as I see them are the following: A program—and I put program first—a program that meets the needs of the people. Secondly, candidates willing to fight for the people. We have got too many candidates where you have to fight for them. We need candidates who are willing to go out and fight for you, to fight for the American people.

Thirdly, there is a need of political organization that belongs to and is controlled by and managed by the rank and file of the people.

Finally, a clear-cut statement of the issues in language, in the simple language that is understandable by all of the people.

Now, my friends, if you have those ingredients, if you have a program that meets the needs of the people, candidates willing to fight for the people, if you have a political organization that belongs to the people and they are a part of it, and if you have a clear-cut statement of the issues in language that is understandable by the people, I submit to you no one can beat you, no one. There is the essence of success.

Now, this is a job which the American Federation of Labor and the Political Education League have undertaken, and I want to commend Mr. Keenan and his organization. I want to commend those political leaders and directors in the local bodies, in the city central bodies. I want to commend those at the State level who have been in there on the firing line doing their job. The program of political education—and that is good emphasis—political education—has advanced with amazing strides. But, my friends, the acid test of the effectiveness insofar as you are concerned, insofar as the vast majority of the American people are concerned, the acid test will be in the election year of 1950. That will be the pay-dirt year.

There are some disturbing signs. Liberal organizations and labor groups have not always set themselves down to the job of effective political action. In some areas there is a tendency on the part of labor to remain aloof from other groups who have similar objectives, and in some areas there is an outright refusal to join hands with other sections of the labor movement and the liberal, democratic forces. Now, if the Fair Deal program is to be passed, if the Taft-Hartley Act is to be repealed, if the people of this country are to get legislation that they were promised and that you worked for, it is going to be a responsibility of the labor movement and of every liberal and democratic organization to forget personal pride, petty differences and to unite behind candidates and around a program between now and 1950.

Yes, the election year of 1950 is the crucial political battleground in the struggle to see whether or not this country of ours is going to go forward in the pattern of the New Deal or whether or not it is going to go backward into the confusion and desperation and disillusionment of the Old Deal. That is what it amounts to.

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I submit to you that the Fair Deal has made significant gains in the Eighty-first Congress. Not enough to please me, not enough to please Mr. Green, not enough to please the officers, Mr. Keenan, not enough to please many people in America—millions and millions of them. Some of those gains can be quickly listed—housing and slum clearance, the greatest program in the history of this country—a program that is going to mean to the city of St. Paul 2,000 low-cost public housing units for the people that desperately need them; a program that is going to mean to my own city of Minneapolis 1,000 low-cost public housing units within the next year for the people that desperately need them; a program that is going to mean 810,000 decent home units for workers in America, for workers and their families that have never had a decent place in which to live for the past 25 years. I submit that is legislation of significance and of great consequence.

A minimum wage of 75 cents an hour has been established. To be sure, the bill was cut down and watered down. You would think, to hear those that did that job, that they could live on less than 75 cents an hour. I have often wanted to pose the question to those who thought the coverage of the minimum wage ought not be extended, I have often wanted to ask them how they get along on 40 cents an hour. I would like to have that answered, because if I get it I am going right back to see Mrs. Humphrey and see what she does with all the money I give her.

Something else has happened. The TVA plant was built as a stand-by in that great regional valley development. Transmission lines for hydroelectric power have been authorized. REA, the very life of the farm belt of this country, has been extended. Rural telephone legislation is now passed. You are going to be able to call up your relatives on the farm; rural telephones so that the people of the farms in America can have the phones as we have them in the cities; grain storage for this great and tremendous productive agriculture of ours; expanded crop insurance for the farmer, who has to face all conditions of the weather. Expanded conservation of our soil.

These are some of the accomplishments of our Congress. The Labor Department has been strengthened for the first time in years. Both political parties year after year have been pledging to strengthen the Labor Department, and the more they have promised to strengthen it the more they have weakened it. At long last a miracle has happened. We actually transferred some agencies to the Labor Department, this one office in the Government whose purpose it is to cooperate with labor; we actually gave it some machinery of government to help the working people of this country.

Yes, we have expanded rivers and harbors, flood control. We have expanded irrigation and reclamation. And every bit of this, my

good friends, is good for America, every bit of it.

If this program that we have pledged ourselves to, that your resolutions have pledged you to, if the Taft-Hartley Act is to be repealed, if the people of this country are to get the legislation that they were promised, I say again that it is the responsibility of the labor movement and of every liberal and democratic movement to get busy now on a local level in your own local communities where you know your own people and get behind a program and behind the office seekers that will carry out that program.

There is a dangerous coalition in this country. There has never in the history of America been a greater propaganda barrage against the American worker than there has been in the last 7, 8, or 9 months. Ever since the miracle of November 2 the soothsayers have been concocting some kind of a new witches' brew to pour out to the American people. While we were celebrating and while we were patting each other on the back the old rear guard was in there plotting and planning every day of the week, getting their machinery ready again for the onslaught.

There is a dangerous coalition, a coalition that distorts public opinion, a coalition that defies the truth, a coalition that is not interested in the presentation of the truth. It is a coalition of the reactionary element of the press of America.

That coalition is made of of the reactionary element of the press, the postwar isolationists, the politically bankrupt leadership—and I must say this even in the presence of my colleague—I say the politically bankrupt leadership of the GOP, and a handful of determined Dixiecrats and the soft-headed confused pinks, along with the outright Communists. That is the coalition that faces America.

They are the ones who have lost faith in this country and whose vision has not gone beyond yesterday, who are incapable of facing the problems of today, and who shudder and shake at the thought of tomorrow. This frustration of political malcontents have set themselves up as a holding company for all and sundry purposes, for all and sundry ideologies. No matter what you are or what you believe, if you are just against the Fair Deal, if you are just against labor, if you are against these things then you hear the old song, "Join up with us," and they join in a common family against a liberal program in domestic affairs and in international affairs. The only qualification for membership in the fraternal order of frustrated politicians is to be against labor, to be against price supports for the farmers, to be against pensions for the aged, to be against the good life, and, God bless you, to be against the welfare state. God bless you, that's what you have to be. The fraternal order of frustrated politicians condemns our policy at home and abroad in the same wild irresponsible charges. At home it is the welfare state they are against, and abroad it is our aid

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to Great Britain and western Europe. Their policy is isolationism abroad and confusion and despair at home, and they have seized upon the concept of one of the most noble, one of the most decent, one of the most worth while and blessed words in the English language—they have seized upon the word "welfare," and they have added to it the word "state," and they have tried to make the American people believe that the welfare state is equivalent to purgatory or hell, or is a manifestation of all the human evil that it is possible to conjure.

As one of the men on the other side I accept that challenge. As one young man I am prepared to do battle with them on any issue. I am prepared to argue the issues of the welfare state. I am prepared to argue the issues of the welfare state just as it is going on in New York at this very hour, where, in that great State, the issue is being brought to the sharp attention of the American people, where one man is going up and down the State talking about statism and another man, a former Governor of that State—may God bless his soul—is going up and down the State talking about people. And mark my words, unless the American people have in some way or another lost their way and lost their reason, that grand and noble man who served for you as governor of the great State—and I speak of former Gov. Herbert Lehman—will be joining with MALONE and HUMPHREY in Washington after next November.

Those who are screaming today against the welfare state tell you that you are losing your liberty, that you are being collectivized, that the omnipotent hand of the state is upon you. Have you ever thought that those who cry out the most about the welfare state today, who are saying that the welfare state will make you lose your liberty are the very people that robbed you of your liberty with the Taft-Hartley Act? They are the very ones. They are opposed to this, they say. Didn't you feel enslaved under the Wagner Act, or did you feel a little bit freer under that act than you do under the Taft-Hartley law? I have a sneaking idea you felt a little bit freer under the Wagner Act.

Let's go along and take a look at this subject and see who is on the right side. I like to believe in the American Constitution, a great immortal document, and yet those who are opposed to the welfare state are registering their opposition, despite the mandate of the Constitution of the United States of America, where it places upon the Government of this country the responsibility to promote the general welfare. And those words are written out in the commerce clause of the Constitution, article I, section 9.

These opponents of the welfare state identify the New Deal and the Fair Deal as the fabric and substance of the welfare state, and then with a flourish of their political pen they have recently called it statism. Doesn't that sound bad? That word cost

somebody a lot of money. That is a product of some Louis XIV brain in American politics. We call it statism. I think it is about time that the American people realized just what these frustrated political malcontents are talking about. By their logic the welfare state is the Fair Deal. Then by their own words they are telling the American people that they oppose the program of social security because that is the New Deal. By their own words they are telling you they oppose the elimination of child labor because that is the New Deal. By their own words they are telling you that they oppose free collective bargaining, because that was the New Deal. By their own words they are telling you that they oppose the Fair Labor Standards Act and a minimum wage, and that was the New Deal. By their own words and by their own criticism of the welfare state and its identity with the New Deal they are telling every farmer in America that they do not believe in price supports for agricultural commodities. They are telling every farmer they do not believe in grain storage, that they do not believe in soil conservation, that they do not believe in REA, that they do not believe in cheap farm credit for farm expansion, that they do not believe in agricultural research.

They are telling the American people, in their irresponsible charges against the so-called welfare state that they want no regulation of the stock market, they want the burglars to be free to do as they see fit. They are opposed to the development of our rivers and our valleys. They favor the growth of monopoly and the liquidation of small business. They deplore the action of the Government of the United States in the field of heart and cancer and mental health research, because that is the New Deal, the Fair Deal.

Yes, these frustrated political malcontents are seeking the confidence and the support of the American people on the basis of a program which repudiates the express desire and policy and wish of the vast majority of the American people. If they think they are going to be elected on that program, they are just plain "nuts." Why, they are going up and down this country telling the American electorate, telling our own intelligent citizenry that they, these frustrated politicians of the past, these soothsayers of yesterday, these special-privilege pleaders of the present, that they should be entrusted with political power in this critical hour.

This sort of political leadership reminds me of the old French kings of whom it was said that they never seemed to learn anything and they never seemed to forget anything. This reactionary leadership apparently has not learned that the American people are through with a do-nothing, backward-moving policy of government, that they are through with union-busting, labor-hating employer organizations.

This type of leadership has not found out that the American people look upon their

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Government as a partner in promoting the security and prosperity and freedom of our country. Two world wars and a major world-wide depression have not demonstrated to these die-hard apostles of the past that we are living in a changed world. And believe me, we are living in a changed world as the fraternal delegates who are here from the western democracies of Europe will tell you—not only a changed world but one that was almost destroyed.

My friends in the labor movement, I urge a rededication on the part of the American Federation of Labor to the fulfillment of our responsibility for international leadership. I repeat, I urge a rededication on the part of every delegate in this great assembled convention, on the part of every member of the American Federation of Labor and every one of its affiliated unions to the fulfillment of our responsibility for international leadership. If this world is going to be a better world we are going to help make it that way. If this world is going to collapse in its own evil, in its own misdoings, we are going to be a part of it. We are not the America of 1800, we are not even the America of 1900; we are the America of 1949 and 1950. We are the America that is the greatest financial power the world has ever known, and believe me, we have to act with a sense of great social responsibility when we hold the money bags of the world. I don't want my country getting the reputation of pinching the last ounce of blood and the last pound of flesh. We are the greatest industrial power in the world. Our industrial know-how goes on beyond any possible comparison in this world, and with that tremendous productivity that is ours, the skill that we have, we cannot just live unto ourselves.

I submit to these men and women in this great assembled convention that the very ethics of our religious faith, whether we be Jew, Gentile, Protestant, or Catholic, every moral tenet of our religious faith tells us that we are our brother's keeper, and he who would deny it will destroy himself.

I submit to you also that it is a privilege to help other people. Nothing that we should go around boasting about, but something about which we should be humble. Isn't it wonderful that out of this terrible destruction of World War II God Almighty spared one nation to help its fellowmen? Isn't it wonderful that out of the terrible cost and the torture and the suffering of millions and millions of people one great economy of this world was spared to lift up the level of mankind?

That is our mission. We have a destiny to fulfill, and that destiny is one which should make every American proud—proud that you are an American, proud that you can do something for those who have done so much for us, because every one of us in this room at one time or another was a DP, every one of us at some time or another in the years gone by in our family were immigrants. Now

it is our opportunity to offer the advice and counsel of a great democracy, of a great, free people—not only to offer it, but to share the fruits of our labor, to share our productivity, to be the good Samaritan—and believe me, friends, no one hates a good Samaritan. But some people hate bill collectors, double-entry bookkeeping artists. So I call upon this labor movement to accept the responsibility for international leadership. The liberal, social, democratic forces of Europe—and by the way, friends, the only hope in Europe are the liberal democratic forces—are looking to us. The hope in Europe does not lie in the reactionary communistic left. That is the black pit of disillusionment and despair. The peoples of Europe will only turn to that when there is no other place to turn. The hope of Europe does not rest in the economic or political leadership of the extreme right, and it does not rest in the mollycoddle leadership of those who want to be in power. It rests with those great forces of the free labor movement, it rests with the forces of the free cooperative movement, it rests with those intellectual leaders of Europe who are attracted to the proposition of human freedom. And may I say the American Federation of Labor, God bless you, may you join with those forces as you are doing in saving western Europe and western civilization.

There is no room in the ranks of labor, in the house of labor for a selfish isolationist policy. The labor movement is one of brotherhood. It is one of sharing, it is one of fraternity. There is no room in the ranks of labor for a political policy that sets labor off from the rest of the community. The political fact of this decade is the recognition of our interdependence, not only our independence, but our interdependence—the interdependence of the nations of the world on trade between the nations and world commerce. The political fact of America is the interdependence of the worker and the farmer. These two great producers of real wealth are the lifeblood of our free, economic system. The economic well-being of both the worker and the farmer is the only hope for a prosperous America.

I wish I had every member of the Chamber of Commerce, every businessman, every merchant in Minnesota in this hall today. The only hope of prosperity along Main Street is the prosperity of the farmer, the producer, and the worker in the factory. That is the only place they have any hope. Unemployment in the ranks of labor, or partial unemployment, depressed prices in the agricultural economy would be more destructive to the American way of life than any atomic bomb in the hands of any foreign aggressor.

My good friends, an economic break-down in America as to its effect upon the world

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situation and the future peace and security of this world would make the atomic bomb that Russia may have look like a firecracker. An economic break-down in America would destroy the productivity and the prosperity of the greatest nation in the world, of the only nation that many other nations are leaning upon and looking to for help.

The greatest contribution that this Nation can give to the rest of the world today is a strong, prosperous, enlightened, humanitarian America. That is the greatest contribution we can give, and those who would seek to destroy us are patiently waiting for us, the American people, to create our own mistakes and our own troubles. The aggressor, or the potential aggressor, the foe and the enemy of free America is a reactionary policy at work that does not recognize the needs of the American people, a reactionary, isolationist policy abroad which fails to recognize the basic needs and legitimate rights of their people. That is the major weakness and the major foe of this country, and I want my friends in the trade-union movement to remember it.

I want you to remember that even as we are in our hours of adversity we have to keep a broad vision. We must keep our eyes set on the higher goals. To be quite frank with you, conventions like this may come to an end unless we do. To be very, very frank with you, world war III may well bring the end of what we call the free way of life.

It is our job, as responsible American citizens, as responsible citizens of the world to figure out to the best of our ability how we can best prevent the catastrophe and calamity of a world war III. It is our job to remember that no matter what may be the cost of peace, it is better than the cost of a catastrophic war.

And I want to say to my budget-balancing friends, to those who cry out for economy, that peace is not cheap, nor is war. But no matter how much we may spend in our crusade for peace, put this down in your memo notebook: It won't be one-tenth of 1 percent of what we have to spend in a do-or-die effort if we should ever be engulfed in world war III. The expenditures for peace are expenditures for the good of the spirit, for the good of the soul and body. The expenditures for peace are expenditures for the good life, for better men and better women, for healthier and more enlightened children, and I want to see the same determination in our eyes and in our minds and bodies, to win this struggle for a free Europe, to win this struggle for a free Asia, for a free world. I want every American to dedicate his life and to dedicate his treasure and to dedicate his ability to the crusade for a just and enduring peace, which we can obtain if we but will it, so help me God.



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