

R E M A R K S
of
SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
at the
PANEL DISCUSSION
of the
NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE
on
"PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS"

Sherman Hotel
Chicago, Illinois

May 14, 1950

Fellow Participants, Ladies and gentlemen: I couldn't help but reflect that the year 1950 has some historical significance, in the field of civil rights. It was fourscore and seven years ago that Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. It was likewise fourscore and seven years ago that the great emancipator cited the challenge to American democracy in his immortal Gettysburg Address, so it seems rather ironic that in this year of 1950, of the fully-grown, matured democracy that we should even be discussing the issue of civil rights. It would seem it should be an accomplished fact.

I am confident that everything that needs to be said in reference to the particular legislative proposals before the Congress has already been said. I do, however, want to make this one observation about these legislative proposals such as the Anti-Lynching Bill, the Anti-Poll Tax Bill, and the Fair Employment Practices Bill. This program is not a radical program. This program is a conservative, moderate program. It is a program that will conserve the fabric of our democracy. A radical program would be one that would destroy it. It is the program that the President has enunciated and which has been so ably forwarded by his aides in the cabinet and our majority leaders in the Senate and the other men who have dedicated their time and energy to it and it is one that represents some of the fundamental aspects of American political life.

I make this statement, and may I say I make it as a challenge. It is impossible to have political freedom without political participation and it is nonsensical to talk about freedom without guaranteeing it to every citizen regardless of his race or creed.

There is no reason to talk of the dignity of man without an assurance of his personal security within an organized society and the doctrine of human equality which is at the very heart of our democratic way is a meaningless doctrine unless there is an opportunity in the social, economic and cultural field for all people.

Now, it just appears that we are 174 years late. We are not in a hurry. We are almost one century and three-fourths behind time, and I would suggest that the job that needs to be done could well be started here. It is perfectly true that the legislative situation in the Congress is an extremely difficult one and no one should under-estimate, no one would know it any bet-

ter than our distinguished chairman, Senator Green and our majority leader, Senator Lucas. I suggest then, the only way to get the job done is do it the way we elect people. You defeat those who are not for you and you elect those who are with you. You are either for civil rights or you are not. You are either for equality or you are not. You don't have to dance around on the needle, the pin point of that needle.

Now, how do we do it? We do it by community support, and I believe that the President's Committee on Civil Rights has created a great area of good will and understanding as has been emphasized here. Tremendous educational progress has been made and community support is building and the job of leadership of the Democratic Party is to work with the people in their respective communities regardless of political party, regardless of what group they belong to, to build the kind of support we need for this legislation.

I would like to emphasize that discrimination in employment is an unhealthy economic condition. It is poor business; it is plain economic stupidity. We need to have the best talent that the country can offer. We cannot afford mediocrity in the economic field nor can we afford it in the political field, and has been emphasized in the field of foreign policy, the passage of civil rights legislation will not cost this country one dollar. The denouncers of the budget can have a field day if we pass this one.

I believe this will do more to strengthen our foreign policy than an additional billion dollars of the Marshall Plan Aid and I personally believe that both political parties have a moral obligation in this issue.

I want to emphasize what my friend, the majority leader said. Our Southern colleagues have not kidded anyone. You can complain about them and say they are wrong on the issue, but you cannot accuse them of hypocrisy, and I say the majority of the Democrats adopted that program at Philadelphia and if the majority of the Republican Party does not go down the line, the Party stands as being hypocritical. The Republicans didn't have an argument on civil rights. They said, "Hallelulah, that is our program!" At least we had quite a fight, as I well remember and I think it is the responsibility of those of us who stayed with the party and were active participants in the Truman campaign of 1948, to deliver our share of votes on the cloture proposition, and I believe it is the counsel of the minority leader to deliver every single Republican vote, because they are on record unanimously as for the program.

Now, Mr. Chairman, just let me make these four concluding statements. The heart of democracy is a guarantee of human rights. If you believe in the democratic way of life, you have to believe in the guarantee of basic civil rights. There is no security of property for anyone my friends, without security of person. Property is a meaningless thing without people that are secure in their personal lives. There is no political liberty without the unhampered right of free political participation. A man is still a slave who is denied the opportunity to have something to say about those who govern him. There is no possibility of human equality where discrimination is unchecked.

I fully recognize that laws do not do away with prejudice. But, laws can do away with the acts of prejudice and what we are attempting to do is to do away with the acts, the manifestations of prejudice and then the job of teachers, of ministers, of the leaders in the spiritual realm is to go out and build the community support that we call education so the program of civil rights is fully a part of the American way.

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Chicago Speech

July 7, 1950

Mr. Bill Johnson
Democratic National Committee
Ring Building
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Enclosed is the transcript of the proceedings
of the Panel Discussion on "Protecting Human Rights" at
the National Democratic Conference held in Chicago on
May 14, which we borrowed from your office recently.

Many thanks for your assistance.

Sincerely yours,

J. L. Hendrickson
Secretary to Senator Humphrey



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