

Wallace: Are you grooming yourself as a candidate for the Presidency?

Humphrey: I would hope that many people in public life would groom themselves for whatever responsibility their constituency may offer to them or whatever responsibility they may feel equipped to perform.

Wallace: Every time a presidential election rolls around, the public has a pretty good idea of which men are really in the running..yet practically all of these men evade the question of whether they're running. Why the lack of candor? What's the political strategy behind this?

Humphrey: I can give you a very candid answer. In my instance I am just not sure this is what I want to do. I am not sure I am equipped to do it. At the present time I am exploring the probabilities and the possibilities. First of all, it is important for a man to know if he has any basis of strength and he must not think of his own evaluation of strength.

Wallace: You mean votes?

Humphrey: Yes, votes, strength, militant support. You must go around with your friends and associates, to see if there is this interest. If you disavow any interest, if you categorically say you will not be involved in a campaign, you have no way of finding out if there is any support.

Wallace: Cabell Phillips recently wrote of you in the New York Times,

"Senator Humphrey's particular domain at present seems to be the farm belt and the New Deal wing of the party. He is not liked in the South where Senator Kennedy, on the other hand, is relatively popular."

Humphrey: If I can have the support of the New Deal liberals in the farm belt, that is a beginning. It is a very good base from which to work, but I am not sure that I have that support. I believe a man will be liked as well as he likes, and I happen to like the people of the South. I disagree with some of the patterns of social contact, but I find a community of interest between myself and the people of the south. I went to school in the South. I have a great community of interests with them. One of these days I am going to make a substantial tour of the South and I am sure we will be able to come out with understanding...even support.

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Wallace: It has been said that you have become "the envoy from the camp of the liberals to the court of Lyndon Johnson", the conservative majority leader from Texas...and that you are also a member of the "inner elite" of the Senate, in which the dominant figure is once again, the Southerner Lyndon Johnson. How do you, an ADA liberal work with Lyndon Johnson?

Humphrey: Let's analyze this fellow, Lyndon Johnson. Lyndon Johnson is not a Southerner, not as such. He is a Westerner. He is more western than he is southern. That is, his inclination is not to the status quo but to the advancement, the forwarding of new efforts.

He does not move as fast as I sometimes want him to or as quickly as others want him to, but he moves faster than the conservative members of the Democratic Party want him to. I would be doing him a disservice, I think, if I said he was a member of the "Confederacy", so to speak. He has broken with his Southern colleagues on many issues. And he has a new deal record in a very deep sense. FDR is his great hero, and he mentions this very often. Perhaps this is where we get our connection.

Wallace: What would you think of Lyndon Johnson as a presidential candidate in 1960?

Humphrey: I think Lyndon Johnson has the capacity for being President. I doubt that Lyndon Johnson's overall political record would satisfy some of those who are of the liberal vintage, but I think the country would be in very safe hands if Lyndon Johnson were president, and not only in safe but able hands.

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