

Speech of Senator Hubert H. Humphrey

Television Debate, Charleston, West Virginia

Wednesday, May 4, 1960

Every political campaign should make a constructive contribution to American democracy. A candidate not only should talk, but he should listen. He should hear the words of the people -- their opinions, their hopes, their needs.

I have learned that you in West Virginia want a government which never rests in the vital effort to build a secure and enduring peace. I have learned that you want a government that cares for the people --- understands the needs of all of the people. You want a government which is not blinded by budget-balancing slogans but rather is dedicated to a balanced nation in which pockets of depression, unemployment, poverty are erased.

The problems of your state are the same as those of other states and indeed, the world itself. These same problems are growing and spreading everywhere like a dangerous cancer.

COPY

There is one thing that is crystal clear.

America needs a Democratic victory. I pledge my whole-hearted and active support to any forward-looking Democrat who may win the nomination. Richard Nixon must not be the next President.

We have had too many years of caretaker government that ignores problems and avoids opportunities. These have been years of shameful neglect of America's needs at home, of waste and loss of America's prestige and influence abroad. We have been the victims of a "No-go, Go-slow, Not-now, Veto" Administration.

Popularity has been substituted for leadership -- mediocrity for principle. Slogans have been offered in place of programs, and public relations instead of public service.

America -- yes, West Virginia -- deserves a better deal.

We have one basic problem -- a conservative Republican government in Washington that is content with standing still in a changing America and a

changing world.

Talk has been substituted for deeds -- nothing has been done about the problems of depressed industries such as your coal mines, or the distressed areas which exist not only in West Virginia but in two hundred areas throughout the nation ---- nothing about growing needs of education. The Republican Administration has put the brakes on the American economy, slowing it down when it should be taking giant strides ahead.

It has complained about the growing surpluses of food and fiber while children in West Virginia and other states suffer from inadequate diet and clothing. It shouts fear of inflation as it adds to the cost of living, hiking interest rates and tightening credit. We pay a terrible price for this indifference -- this do-nothing attitude.

I have sensed your healthy scepticism about the bold words and the weak deeds of a Republican Administration. It promised everything -- it has done nothing. It knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Still, these problems in West Virginia and in other states are not the worst America faces. Time has caught up with America. For the past seven years, the Soviet Union has been eating up the lead America inherited from past Democratic Administrations. It is a pitiful inheritance our next President will receive from this Administration when he sits across the table from Dictator Khrushchev.

The next ten years may well decide whether the United States will be a first class power or become a second class nation. More than a year ago I sat across the table from Khrushchev for better than eight hours. He is determined to surpass the United States. He is determined that Communism will rule the world. I am determined that it will not.

The next President must arouse this nation to heroic deeds. He must courageously search for a lasting peace with justice and freedom. He must understand the complexities of disarmament negotiations, the workings of the United Nations, and the skillful use of diplomacy.

He must develop a force for peace -- using our food to feed the hungry, our medical knowledge to heal the sick, our education to teach the illiterate. I have tried to prepare myself for this responsibility.

The West Virginia primary is more than a popularity contest. There are differences between the candidates --- differences of background, public record, experience, and temperament. I learned my economics in the Dust Bowl of South Dakota during the harsh days of the Depression. I did not need to learn first hand in the coal fields of West Virginia about human suffering. I have seen it before in the Depression years, and recently around the iron mines of Minnesota. I have not learned my economics from a textbook. But the basic difference has been very accurately assessed by the journalists as one of temperament -- of attitude, and approach. How

How you should vote depends on your sober assessment of the needs of West Virginia, of America and of the world. If you are satisfied with things as they are, with the old wine under a new label, you will

probably vote in November for the Crown Prince of the Republican Party -- Mr. Nixon. If you think only some little change -- a "moderate" amount of change -- is required, you may probably vote for my friend and opponent. But if you believe that vigorous, hard-hitting, constructive action is required --- you should know from my record that I am the man for you.

#

COPY

SPEECH FOR TV APPEARANCE

Wednesday, May 4 in Charleston, W. Va.

Harry Ernst

Before we turn to the issues in this campaign, I would like to thank the fine people of West Virginia for the hospitality they have shown me during these hectic weeks. In a sense, this primary has been a magnificent discovery for me. I have discovered one of the nation's most beautiful and fascinating states. And in this age of suspicious hostility, the sincerity and friendliness of its people is indeed refreshing.

I think West Virginia also will benefit from this vigorous Democratic Primary, which has helped the nation discover the promise and potential of this great state.

(MORE)

ADD 1---

A terrible mistake will be made if we discuss West Virginia's economic conditions only in terms of what is rather than what can be. For the future growth of West Virginia is truly unlimited. With its vast natural resources and beautiful hills and forests, West Virginia can become a dynamic example of how a free society can meet the challenges of the 20th Century without destroying its proud heritage.

Let me pause for a moment and discuss West Virginia's proud heritage with you -- and the nation. West Virginia ranks sixth in the nation in the value of mineral production. It ranks first in coal, fourth in natural gas and fifth in the construction of new chemical facilities. Its state park and forest system is among the finest in the nation and ideal for pleasant family vacations.

Centrally located between the Great Lakes and our large Eastern seaboard cities, West Virginia has a proud frontier heritage rich with the exciting adventures of such early Americans as George Washington and Daniel Boone.

(MORE)

ADD 2---

The story of its creation as a state loyal to the Union during the Civil War is one of the most exciting to be found in the birth records of our 50 states. And its sons and daughters today include some of our most illustrious citizens: [Walter Reuther, Pearl Buck; Col. Charles Yeager, the first person in the world to fly faster than the speed of sound; and Eleanor Steber of the Metropolitan Opera.] *bet*

This brief glimpse at West Virginia's past and present points to the promise of her future. Blessed with abundant natural resources and a proud, energetic people, West Virginia can achieve its promise if imaginative leadership only emerges on every level of government. Vital to your future growth is the election of a dynamic Democratic President, who can provide the sympathetic, helping hand the White House now denies. If you elect such a man as President, I envision this future for West Virginia:

(MORE)

ADD 3---

1. Utilizing its magnificent scenery and forests, West Virginia will become a prosperous playground for the Eastern United States, which is rapidly becoming one vast concrete, metropolitan area stretching from New York City to Norfolk. In this way, the beauty and traditions of West Virginia can be preserved while developing a prosperous economy.

My ten-point program for West Virginia, which I would pursue vigorously if elected President, calls for such measures as the creation of a Youth Conservation Corps and passage of such measures as the Water Pollution Bill to help clean up your streams, which President Eisenhower vetoed in February. I also would wholeheartedly support other bills aimed at preserving and expanding the recreational potential of your great state.

(MORE)

ADD 4---

2. The rapid expansion of West Virginia's industrial economy in two directions: toward large plants, such as the Kaiser Aluminum plant at Ravenswood, ⁱⁿ your Ohio Valley and other suitable areas, and toward small, locally-owned plants in areas where the terrain and water supply aren't suited for larger developments.

Such industrial expansion is truly a national problem that only can be solved by throwing the penny-pinchers out of the White House and replacing their fiscal stinginess with dynamic policies which would raise the growth rate of the U. S. economy from 2 to at least 5 per cent a year. The Russians are expanding their economy at a rate of 8 to 10 per cent a year. Our national survival depends on raising our economy's growth rate.

For example, an Area Redevelopment Bill -- which President Eisenhower vetoed in 1958 -- would contribute to the growth of our national economy in the direction of the small, locally-owned plants that I mentioned.

(MORE)

ADD 5---

Through such legislation, West Virginia communities could receive loans and technical assistance so they could develop suitable industries geared to utilizing the state's vast natural resources. West Virginia ranks seventh in the nation in the production of hardwood lumber. But there are only a handful of small furniture and woodworking plants located in your state. An Area Redevelopment Bill would provide the impetus to begin expanding your economy in this and other directions.

3. The stabilization and expansion of your great coal industry, which will continue to be an important part of the nation's economy. This can be accomplished through such legislation as the Coal Research and Development Bill, which President Eisenhower also vetoed in 1959, and building electrical generating plants at the mouth of mines to meet an expanding economy's power needs.

(MORE)

ADD 6---

This three-dimensional picture of a bright future for West Virginia -- resting on tourism, suitable industrial expansion and finding new frontiers for your coal industry -- also will depend on other dynamic programs which I would advocate as President.

These would include increased aid to expand your highway system; a vastly expanded aid-to-housing program, which would enable you to declare war on your rural and city slums; and a flexible program of federal aid-to-education, which should include funds for adult education so your displaced coal miners can acquire new skills and understandings with which to build new lives for themselves and their families.

With improved roads, an expanded educational system and the elimination of blighted housing, West Virginia could leap into the bright future which I envision.

(MORE)

ADD 7---

But I believe this only can be done if the Democratic Party nominates -- and elects -- a genuine liberal as President. In this age of increasing centralization in private industry, only your government -- of and for and by the people -- ~~the~~ can provide the assistance which will enable our states and communities to serve their citizens responsibly. Gigantic efforts also will be required of our cities and states. Certainly the Federal Government can't do the job alone. But in our truly national economy, we must shape truly national solutions. The nation can't afford the waste of undeveloped genius in our children, who in the name of states rights, are denied the ~~the~~ human right to realize their God-given potential.

West Virginia is a tragic illustration of the governmental gap our nation has faced under the irresponsible years of Republican stagnation in Washington. Your state ranks 15th nationally in the basic wealth it contributes to the nation, but 38th in per capita income.

(MORE)

ADD 8---

Your production leaves West Virginia in tank, coal and flat cars to be turned into finished consumer products which carry a high ratio of local and state taxes, which can be passed on to the residents of other states. The only way West Virginia can hope to receive its fair share of the national wealth is through the Federal aid programs and the closing of tax loopholes which I advocate.

The contributions West Virginia has made to the nation equal -- and often exceed -- those of any other state. On a per capita basis, more of your sons were killed or wounded in the Korean conflict than any other state. During World War II, your coal miners stayed on the job to provide the fuel that was needed for national defense despite the lure of higher-paying jobs in defense factories across the land.

(MORE)

ADD 9---

For these sacrifices, you have been rewarded with the indifference of federal agencies that are supposed to be concerned with your welfare, such as the Department of Commerce, and the fantastic ignorance of President Eisenhower, who only last week admitted at his press conference that he wasn't even aware of economic conditions in your coal fields.

Such callous neglect of human suffering characterizes the Eisenhower Administration's belief that the government which serves the least -- meaning the well-to-do--- serves best.

While the Republicans have been rising the interest rates so you must pay more for your homes, the first strong dose of technological unemployment -- which threatens the rest of the nation in the decade ahead -- had hit West Virginia's coal fields as machines replaced miners.

(MORE)

ADD 10---

President Eisenhower's reaction to such conditions was to veto helpful bills passed by Democratic Congresses and to fly around the world in search of ways we can help the unfortunate of other lands while ignoring our own.

I always have favored economic aid to underdeveloped countries as necessary to our national survival. But I don't favor the Eisenhower brand of hypocrisy which says such aid is highly desirable as long as you help anyone but deserving Americans who find themselves jobless through no fault of their own. If such enlightened aid is right for the world, then it's right for West Virginia and the nation, too.

Federal standards for unemployment insurance, a \$1.25 minimum wage, a stand-by public works program, and a food-stamp plan to better utilize our vast agricultural surpluses are other measures which I have advocated and will continue to advocate in the best interests of America.

(MORE)

ADD 11---

West Virginia's problems -- and promise for future growth and prosperity -- are simply the problems of the nation. For example, there are at least 175 distressed labor markets in the United States and only a dozen of these are in West Virginia. They can be found from Maine to California because technological unemployment knows no geographical boundaries. What's happening in West Virginia and other sections of the country today very well could happen to relatively prosperous towns in the decade ahead. And the Eisenhower Administration has taken no steps to plan for an orderly transition in our nation's economic growth.

The unmet needs of West Virginia also are the unmet needs of the nation -- schools, highways, housing, conservation, recreational development -- the list is endless. During what has been aptly called "the Eisenhower holiday from history," we have accumulated a backlog of social needs that soon will strangle our national growth unless we act -- immediately and vigorously.

(MORE)

ADD 12---

Until we get what I call a government with a heart in Washington, West Virginia and America will never achieve their promise of potential greatness.

A government with a heart reacts instantly and vigorously when poverty stalks the land. A government with a heart also recognizes the potential of people and helps create the climate in which they can grow. A government with a heart never turns its back on people, but recognizes that the people are the government and uses every resource at its command to help them build a better life for themselves and their children.



Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



www.mnhs.org