

Ch Randolph
Morris Abram
William Coleman

REMARKS OF

VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

LUNCHEON SESSION, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1965

PLANNING SESSION -- WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE

"TO FULFILL THESE RIGHTS"

I am indeed privileged to join with you in this important planning session for the White House Conference "To Fulfill These Rights."

My message today will be brief, for I want to leave ample time for questions, answers, and a general discussion of the vital questions which concern us.

As President Johnson emphasized last evening, we have convened this planning session out of our deep concern that the full resources of America--both public and private--be marshaled in the continuing struggle against discrimination, prejudice, deprivation and inequality.

And, as the President stated in such eloquent fashion,
this Administration is committed to assuming its share of
this burden.

h The President stressed his deep concern for the quality
of justice throughout America. "Equal justice under law"
is an empty sham unless laws are administered fairly without
regard for a person's race or color. The President's
proposed legislation dealing with the composition of juries
will be a major step forward in this urgent task of
guaranteeing quality justice for all Americans.

h The President also announced two other matters of prime
importance to this planning session: a directive from the
Attorney General to all Federal agencies to ferret out

discrimination whenever it exists in their programs, and a request to the United States Commission on Civil Rights to study discrimination in education in all parts of the country.

↳ The President's objective in this regard was explicit: "to develop a firm foundation of facts on which local and state governments can build a school system that is colorblind."

↳ We have asked you to Washington to speafrankly about these matters--to debate and discuss openly, to examine these terribly complex problems with honesty and candor. ↳ For we understand that only in the atmosphere of free discussion can we hope to summon the wisdom and the courage to prevail in this great test of democratic government, and ~~even of civilization~~ ~~itself.~~

↳ During the past few years we have learned many things as we pushed forward our two-pronged offensive against discrimination and deprivation. ↳ But perhaps the lesson which has come home to us most vividly concerns the complexity and tenacity of the problems which confront us.

↳ We have learned there are no simple solutions...and no single answers. We have come to appreciate fully that the combination of a century of slavery followed by a century

of discrimination and segregation, inadequate education, inferior housing, unemployment and a host of other attendant evils have wreaked upon this land and people a curse which cannot be wiped away quickly or easily.

Today we can identify certain priority items on our agenda which stem directly from the complex and tenacious nature of these problems:

--We see the need to intensify concern not just for the impact of federally sponsored programs in the aggregate, but especially for the capacity of these programs to affect individual lives with humanity and sensitivity.

--We see the need to mount comprehensive area-wide attacks on the interrelated problems of housing, education, employment, but often find these attacks blunted by the sprawling, overlapping nature of our urban political jurisdictions.

<--We understand the need to achieve greater coordination and collaboration among the multitude of federal, state and local ^{programs} ~~problems~~ of employment, education, training, housing, health care, and community organization.

<--We discover among our fellow citizens a tendency to believe the civil rights struggle has now been concluded with the passage of the two historic civil rights acts of 1964 and 1965, or the promulgation of ~~a~~ particular executive orders, failing to realize that the most difficult and challenging tasks still have not been faced squarely--that we are now in a period where greater--not less--courage, sacrifice, wisdom, and understanding will be required of the American people of all races, colors, and creeds.

<--We see the need to broaden the participation of the American people in this historic struggle so that the

quest for equality in fact, and not just in theory, becomes an effort which draws sustenance and support from all segments of the American community.

In light of these realities, we must discover new ways of reaching out to the whole person in the context of the whole community--breaking the downward spiral of defeat and despair and, instead, making new persons who can, in turn, assume their share of this national effort.

✓ We do not have all the answers. We only know that we are fully committed to achieving victory--whatever the cost, whatever the sacrifice. We ask your help.

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WHITEHOUSE CONFERENCE

"TO FULFILL THESE RIGHTS"

ADDRESS BY THE HONORABLE HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

CENTER BALLROOM
Washington Hilton Hotel
Wednesday, November 16, 1965
1:45 o'clock p.m.

CHAIRMAN RANDOLPH: Will the Conference please be in order.

During the period of questions may I request that delegates who wish to ask a question of the Vice President to go to one of the microphones on the floor and before you begin, to announce your name and the organization with which you are affiliated.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, the Vice President of the United States.

(Standing ovation.)

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Thank you very much, Chairman Randolph.

I want to thank you for that wonderful lunch that I just had.

(Laughter.)

Also our Co-Chairman, Morris Abram and William Coleman and the participants in this splendid Whitehouse Conference.

I couldn't help but reflect as Chairman Randolph

mentioned, the questioning period, of a comment of former President Harry Truman, when he reflected upon visiting the college audience. He said that every time that he went out to a college audience, which was most exciting and challenging and mentioned that he was available for a question period, it made him wish that he had stayed in Washington. I am of the opinion now that Mr. Randolph has mentioned the possibility of a question period, it might have been just as well if I had stayed back in the office. It may have been a little easier of an afternoon for me.

But I wanted very much to share in this program and participate as a participant and to learn and to observe from your work.

I feel privileged to join with you in this important planning session for the Whitehouse Conference To Fulfill These Rights. I have been on the fringes of the preliminary plans of the planning session, so that I do feel somewhat acquainted with the overall structure of the Conference.

My message today will be, I trust, to the point in brief, for I want to leave ample time for questions, time for some answers, and a general discussion of the vital questions which concern all of us.

Every one of us in this assembly are deeply involved in the issue of human rights. Some of us have been involved in it and a part of it for many years of our lives. So that our deliberations will come, I believe, from seasoned and experienced

minds.

As President Johnson emphasized last evening, we have convened this planning session out of our deep concern that the full resources of America, both public and private, shall be marshalled in the continuing struggle against discrimination, prejudice, depravation and inequality.

How good it seems to be able to speak so openly of this effort on the part of government and individuals. It was not always so.

I can remember earlier days in this community, and I can remember that a conference of this sort would have been frowned upon rather than to have been looked upon with respect and admiration and hope.

The President spoke to us last evening in a most reassuring and hopeful manner. He stated in such eloquent fashion that this Administration is committed without qualification to assuming its share of this burden of the continuing struggle against inequality, depravation and discrimination, segregation and intolerance.

The President stressed his deep concern for the quality of justice throughout America -- equal justice under the law is an empty sham unless laws are administered fairly without regard for a person's race or color.

(Applause.)

The President proposed legislation dealing with the

composition of juries will be a major step forward in this urgent task of guaranteeing equality in quality of justice for all Americans.

(Applause.)

I must say that in all of the utterances that I have heard in recent dates that meant much to me, a statement of the President last night on this quality of justice and equality or equal treatment under the law was the most reassuring.

The President also announced two other matters of prime importance to this planning session -- a directive from the Attorney General to all agencies to ferret out discrimination wherever it exists in their programs and their request to the United States Commission on Civil Rights to study discrimination in education in all parts of the country. We are indebted to the Civil Rights Commission for many provocative and helpful studies, and I take this moment today to salute that Commission for its fearless and courageous work in behalf of equal justice.

(Applause.)

The President's objective in this regard was explicit -- to develop a firm foundation of facts on which local and state governments can build a school system that is colorblind. And you can rest assured that on the basis of those facts your Government will take action. We not only want a school system that is colorblind, but we want a school system in this country that is worthy of the promise of every individual in this nation.

(Applause.)

Now, we have asked you to Washington to speak frankly about these matters -- to debate and to discuss openly, to examine these terribly complex problems with honesty and candor, and I was pleased to see in one of our local newspapers -- I believe it was Monday of this week -- a lead article entitled, "Diversity To Be Welcomed By White House Panel on Civil Rights. Ideals, Not Pre-arranged Consensus Seen As The Goal." This was an article by the columnist of the Washington Post, Robert E. Baker, and that headline and the body of that article tells or exemplifies the spirit of this Conference and also indicates the desire of those of us in government relating to this Conference.

We understand that only in the atmosphere of free discussion can we hope to summon the wisdom and the courage to prevail in this great test of democratic government and civilization itself.

During the past few years we have learned many things as we pushed forward our two-pronged defensive against discrimination and deprivation. But perhaps the least lesson which has come to us most vividly concerns the complexity and the tenacity of the problems which confront us. I can recall when we thought that all we needed to do was to pass just a few laws. I can remember when some people thought all we needed to was to pass laws to eliminate poll taxes and to make lynching a Federal crime and it wasn't long ago. I can recall that meetings much larger than this and more enthusiastic would cheer to the rafters just the call upon the Congress that we have Federal statute relating to equal employment opportunity. Those were the far out suggestions, yea, of ten, 15 years ago. Today, these suggestions are accepted with a yawn and are looked upon as anything but exciting and even challenging.

But we have learned, haven't we, that there are no simple solutions and there are no single answers, and I might add that each of us has had to learn it in his own way and it would be well for us to ponder that some of the learning process has to take place even amongst those of us who feel that we are deeply committed to this whole program of full citizenship,

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full rights and full opportunity for every one. We have come to appreciate fully the combination of a century of slavery, followed by a century of discrimination and segregation, inadequate education, inferior housing, unemployment, and a host of other attendant evils have reeked upon this land and people, white and black alike, people of every description, a curse which cannot be wiped away quickly and easily. And I would hope that in the deliberations of this conference we can make it crystal clear that what we seek to do is not merely to help the Negro-American, or the Indian-American, or the Puerto Rican, or the Spanish speaking American, but what we are seeking to do is to uplift or to raise to higher levels of performance all of America and all Americans.

(Applause.)

I think one of the weaknesses that has grown into the Civil Rights movements is that we seem to feel that somehow or another, we are doing something for somebody else. What we are doing is something for ourselves, each and every one of us, regardless of our background, or race, our ethnic origin or how we spell our last name or where we come from.

(Applause.)

The day we can identify certain priority items on our agenda, which stem directly from the complex and tenacious nature of these problems, we see the need to intensify concern, not just for the impact of Federally-sponsored programs in

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the aggregate, but especially for the capacity of these programs to affect individual lives with humanity and sensitivity. We see the need to mount comprehensive area-wide attacks on the interrelated problems of housing, education, employment, but often find that these attacks are wanted by the sprawling, overlapping nature of our urban political jurisdictions. We understand the need to achieve greater coordination and cooperation among the multitude of Federal, state and local programs of employment and of education, training, housing, health care and community organizations.

You will be interested to know that yesterday afternoon for two hours the Economic Opportunity Council which is for the domestic economy like the National Security Council is for our national security, our military and foreign policy, that the Economic Opportunity Council met yesterday afternoon for better than two hours on this very subject of how we can launch an area attack, an integrated attack using every force and every -- using every tool, I should say, and every resource of this Government to help build better communities, to help people build better lives and more meaningful lives and how we can coordinate the programs of employment and education and training and housing and health care and community organization so that we can maximize the benefits of these programs. This is individually applied, separately applied, they lose their impact or much of their meaning. But applied in a synchronized,

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harmonious, integrated manner they can do some amazing things.

We discover among our fellow citizens a tendency to believe that the Civil Rights struggle has now been concluded with the passage of two historic Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, or the promulgation of a particular Executive Order. These fellow citizens of ours fail to realize that the most difficult and challenging task still has not been faced squarely, that we are now in a period where graver, not less greater, greater, not less courage, greater and not less sacrifice and wisdom and understanding will be required of the American people of all races, colors and creeds. What we have done in these two historic acts is merely to establish the ground rules by which we can wage the struggle and now we have to go to the victory. We see the need to broaden the participation of the American people and I go back to what I said earlier, to make this struggle our struggle, everybody's struggle, in this great effort, so that the questions for equality in fact and not just in theory becomes an effort which draws sustenance and support from every segment of the American community. I know of no way that you can win this battle, that we can even hope to have victory for ourselves and our nation unless it becomes an all out national effort.

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Now, in light of these realities, and I think I stated some of them, that you have stated to me repeatedly, we must discover new ways or to strengthen old ways of reaching out to the whole person in the context of the whole community, breaking it -- breaking the downward spiral of defeat and despair, and instead, making new persons who can in turn assume their share of this national effort.

In a real manner we will have to build whole new communities, based upon new community and personal attitudes. We have now the challenge of translating law into practice. We have legislated against segregation, we have legislated for equality of treatment, we have legislated for fair play and opportunity. The question now is, are we prepared to live it and the question is, the question is of the willingness of this nation to live by what it says, to live by its laws.

(Applause.)

Now, my good friends, if we had all of the answers there wouldn't have been any need to have made you take this journey and I think that each of us should ask ourselves, was this trip really necessary? And I think it was. I think your visit to Washington is not only necessary, I think it is of the utmost importance. We do not have all of the answers. We are stymied. We face some blind alleys, so to speak. We have been moving in one direction and another and not finding the answers. We only know that we are committed to achieving victory and we

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also know that we must win this victory, that there can be no thought of defeat. Whatever the cost or whatever the sacrifice, whatever the change or changes must be made, we must win the victory. And so I come here today as one of the officers of your government, and as one who has at least put most of his adult life into this struggle of achieving the full rights of citizenship, the full opportunities of the blessings of this nation. I come here very candidly and frankly in all humility to ask for your help, to ask you to think through these problems and in a very real sense to be humble in your thought, because had we known all of the answers, some of them would be more evident than they are today. So let us join together not in the spirit of acrimony or rancor, or even in the spirit of I know it, but no one would listen, but rather to join together here as patriots in the common cause of human justice, believers in human dignity and willing to practice the meaning of that great ideal.

I honestly believe that if we walk and talk humbly, in the presence of our fellow being, human beings and our God, that we can find the answers. Let us prayerfully hope that they will come from these deliberations.

Now, I submit myself to that precarious pursuit and experience of questions and I ask for your guidance and also may I say for your understanding and friendly sympathy.

Thank you very much.

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(Standing ovation.)

CHAIRMAN RANDOLPH: Thank you, Mr. President for that great address.

Now, questions should come from the panelists and not from the press.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, I would like to ask this very simple question but I think -- how does the Administration feel that it can effect a change in the economic relationships of black vis-a-vis white when the hotel in which the conference is being held is a microcosm of the problem we are here to deal with? I hope that doesn't need elaboration.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: It does.

QUESTION: I notice on entering the hotel and looking in the executive offices, that I found no Negroes there, I find Negroes only in menial jobs in this hotel. Everywhere I look I see the problem that I came here to deal with.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Well, it's good that you have mentioned it, then, may I say? Because the law of the land is of course now -- it is only a recent law, but it should have long ago been the practice of equal employment and opportunity. But as was indicated a number of times, this also includes the preparation and training that goes with that.

I am not sure what the practices of the management of this hotel happen to be, but I know at least it is a non-segregated

hotel. I also understand that it does have a practice of what it believes to be equal employment opportunity.

If you are correct in your statement, and I hope the management has listened attentively. They are missing a good bargain.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, the feeling that a massive public works program, and I mean in excess of \$25 billion a year to begin and a \$2 minimum wage with extended coverage to all workers, including agricultural, hospital and so forth, is vital to making major improvements in the economic conditions of Negroes in this country. This also goes for many poor whites. Now, what is your position with respect to these matters?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Well, I wouldn't be much of a public official if I had a quick answer to that, because the first thing that a man in public life ought to have is a sense of looking at a proposition as broad and as encompassing as that with some study and some thoughtfulness. If it is the view of this conference, if your expression is the view of this conference, you can rest assured that this Administration will respect that view and will give it the most thoughtful consideration. But, for the Vice President of the United States who doesn't have a vote in either the House or the Senate and is not the President, to get up here and say that the statement of one gentleman or even representing one organization shall

become national policy or shall have the blessing of the Administration at this occasions would disqualify me for this high office.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, I think it is quite obvious to those of us who are here that the National Administration is presently prepared to move and is inclined to move on civil rights. But in Chicago and in other localities the establishment which too often includes the Democratic machines of the local areas is obviously not prepared and the Federal Government, thought it has passed legislation, to me at least appeared to appear not to enforce that legislation.

Specifically, the elementary and secondary acts which Chicago came under -- which Chicago applied for \$32 million was cut off. Mr. Keppell, I think among the civil rights movement in that instance is considered to have taken a courageous stand, was not obviously backed by the Administration, at least it was not evident to us.

I am wondering what meaning it really has and how long we are going to continue to pass Federal legislation without provision and vigorous enforcement of that legislation and that shouldn't this Conference in fact -- and I hope it comes out -- make the criticism of the national government -- the Democratic party of having failed -- of having passed legislation with the Federal Government not having been prepared to enforce that legislation?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: The purpose of this Conference is to speak its mind. You were not invited here to give an automatic stamp of approval. We have run out of rubber stamps and we don't need any and we don't want any. They are not needed. We want thoughtful consideration of problems and opportunities out of this Conference. That's why this Conference is known as the Whitehouse Conference.

I think it was a rather courageous act and may I say a very inspired act on the part of the President to call upon the leaders of this country to think through all of these matters.

You mentioned a very serious problem. We are not unaware

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of this problem and you have also heard from the highest office of this land that these laws will be enforced.

I want to say that as one who was a Mayor of a city of over a half million people, that I often said to my police department, you don't have to have any intelligence to enforce a law, but you have to have a good deal of it to get observance of the law. We hope to get observance of the law, but we have the will to enforce the law and the law will be enforced and the President of the United States said last night, related with his message, giving thought to the various types of problems that you have enunciated. He calls upon the Civil Rights Commission to make a factual study of the educational structure in this country in relationship of that educational structure to the fulfillment of the Civil Rights objectives -- the objectives of the civil rights law and on the basis of those facts we will take the action that is required under the law.

I have helped pass that law, my friend, and I am prepared as a public official in this country to see its enforcement. I am also prepared, may I say, to walk the extra mile to work with people who seek observance and sometimes you would be surprised, you can get a goodly number of people to do things that they ought to do by being less belligerent and more considerate. We are going to be willing to apply both the carrot and the stick. We are willing to apply both the sense of cooperation and if need be, in the enforcement of the statute.

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Have no doubt about that, wherever you may come from.

(Applause.)

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, are we to understand from your statements for Chicago --

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I wasn't speaking only of Chicago. I am not a parochialist. Problems of this nature are not related to any one city. I can take you to practically any city and you will find the same problem.

QUESTION: But we referred then to education. I was thinking where Federal funds are being spent in employment and housing, are we to understand that the Federal Government is now willing to go that next step of enforcing certain statutes to insure the enforcement of the non-segregation or discrimination clauses?

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VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: You are absolutely right.

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VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: You are absolutely right.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, much attention in recent months has been given to social, economic and political weaknesses of the Negro community which prevented them achieving equality. Coming from the City of Cleveland where the Negro community has demonstrated unprecedented political strength, I am much concerned about the weaknesses in the society at large.

What would you recommend on a national level to eliminate corruption in local political machines which attempts to stymie citizen involvement in local government.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I would recommend more citizen involvement in local government. If there are rascals in City Hall, the people know how to get rid of them.

I led a little crusade in my own community at one time to do something about City Hall and we did something about it and we did it through the help of people.

I know of no way that you can change the pattern of the community unless there is an aroused citizenry, whatever the community may be.

There is no single formula of how to either eradicate or detect corruption, and I am not accusing any one of corruption, because that is a very sensitive accusation unless you can prove it. But if there is a feeling in any community that your government is not responsive to the needs of the people in that community, if there is the right to vote, and I say this is the most

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powerful tool that we have for the correction of many of the inequities and inequalities, I urge people to not only to register, not only to vote, but to know who they are voting for and what they are voting for.

Voter education is a part of voter registration.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, first, with respect to the administration of justice and employment in Federal and state courts. Do you believe personally that this should be covered by Title VII or equal employment opportunity statute or regulation or rules, and secondly, with respect to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, do you believe that it should enforce existing laws which does not make it as I understand it, an investigative agency, but makes it actually an agency like all citizens that can make arrests?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Let's get the first part of the question first.

I recall that the President last night said that he was asking the Attorney General to look into these matters of our juries and of the protection of citizens rights, and the Civil Rights Commission as you know made three recommendations in this area of the protection of citizen rights of persons that were abusing the mails or engaged in interstate commerce or any act of interstate commerce. This will be done.

I can assure you that the Government of the United States will not be unmindful of its responsibility for the

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It is not as we put it generally an action agency except in those matters of interstate crime to which it has been assigned such as kidnapping under statute and I believe there are certain other specific statutes. I am not fully familiar with it.

But again, may I say on these matters, the purpose of this conference is to get your thinking on it. I do not come here with the panacea at hand. I only know that this government is prepared to listen to constructive suggestions to meet what are evident needs and we ask you to come here to help us find the formula and the solution and the answers to these problems to meet these needs and your advice, sir, will be most welcomed in these areas to which you referred.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. Vice President.

CHAIRMAN RANDOLPH: May I say, inasmuch as we must return to the workshops so that we may proceed with our work there, although this is a very interesting session, we can't go any farther with it. I want to thank you for this splendid session.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I was just getting warmed up.

CHAIRMAN RANDOLPH: I want to thank you for the interest you have manifested and the very illuminating questions as well as the answers given by the Vice President.

Thank you, Mr. Vice President.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Thank you very much.

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CHAIRMAN RANDOLPH: Kindly take your seats, friends.

Because of some misunderstanding about the right of some of the participants in the conference to hold conferences with members of the press, the Chair wants to make this following statement:

Participants in this meeting bringing a variety of experience and background in and out of the civil rights movement and there is no intention that any participant should feel reluctant in speaking with the press on any of his interests or capacities. We only hope that in the interest of order and perspective, that views of the session panels and seminars will come from the Chairmen of their respective delegates and delegated representatives.

(Whereupon, at 2:30 p.m. the luncheon session was adjourned.)



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