

Address by Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey  
to the National 4-H Conference, April 20, 1966

Thank you Dr. Davis and my good friends of the 4-H Club movement. I have just had the unusual honor and high privilege of being greeted by some of the most illustrious members of this distinguished assembly, namely the four members from the State of Minnesota and Bill Milbrath. I regret that my old friend Leonard Harkness isn't here with us today, but he sent good representation and he knows things are in good hands.

I apologize to you for not arriving on the scheduled hour that you had hoped that I might get here -- at least that you had planned that I might be here -- but the workings of government are not only slow but they're unpredictable. This morning we had a long session starting at 8:30 discussing many areas of government activity as it relates to youth opportunity in our nation, and governmental activities that relate to helping and working with many of our people that have less than an even break in life -- people in the poverty areas and people that lack adequate training and education.

I have <sup>of</sup>all/my life been deeply interested in and concerned about the lack of development of the great human resources of our nation, the human resources that are so abundant and yet sometimes so inadequately organized and developed. We are giving our attention to these human resources as never before, in vast programs of educational opportunity, elementary, secondary, higher education, vocational education, manpower training and development. And during the summer months we will have approximately 2,000,000 young men and women out of the colleges and universities and out of the high schools that do not have jobs. We are working on programs

right now to see to it that job opportunities are available, that training comes with those job opportunities, and that a better America results from it.

This is such a big country that when you start to make plans for anything in the country you almost lose yourself. It isn't like when I was mayor of the city of Minneapolis and would make some plans about my city. I could literally get to the 22nd story of any building or the 30th story and look out over the whole city and see it. The only way you can see this whole country is to be an astronaut and they haven't asked me yet to take a flight in the space capsule and I hope that no one does, because it wouldn't be proper for the Vice President to turn it down. I wouldn't set a good example. If I went I think that would be the last of the example.

But when we do seek to improvise and design programs of national significance it requires a great amount of attention to detail. Now I know that your emphasis in your conference is on international responsibility, international opportunity. I could almost say international citizenship.

If there is one fact of your time and my time, it is the fact of interdependence and not just independence. The only way I know that a person can preserve his own individuality in a meaningful way is to cooperate with other people in preserving an orderly and progressive community, and the only way that I know that a nation can preserve its own sovereignty and its own independence and nationality is by cooperating with other nations in a spirit of interdependence and international cooperation. These are the facts of life. There was a time our oceans were barriers, today they are hardly even bridges, they are so close to

the shore-line of another nation.

I said not long ago to a group of young people that Saigon, Viet Nam, is closer to Chicago, Illinois, now than London, England, was in 1940, and yet every one of us feels closely identified with Europe. Our forebears are basically European for most of us, and Europe is almost like a next door neighbor. We read about France, Germany and the low countries, Belgium, Holland, the Scandinavian countries, Italy, Austria, all the countries of Europe. They seem like almost neighbors. We speak of them almost as we do another state even though they are independent nations with their own cultures.

But we don't feel that way about Asia or about Africa. We do in a sense about Latin America, but I venture to say we know much less about Latin America than we do about any one country in Europe. And yet, my fellow Americans, it has been written 100,000 times in recent days that the United States of America is a leader of the free world. Sometimes it is just written that we are the world leader. I want to say to you that if we are the leader of the world or a world leader, then we have to have a full world knowledge and acquaintanceship, or to put it another way in the negative, you cannot be a world leader with a half world knowledge. Lack of understanding and lack of knowledge breeds prejudice and fear, and ignorance is indeed the fountainhead of prejudice and fear.

Much of our trouble today, it seems to me, in many areas of the world, is due to the fact that we had little or no understanding or knowledge of the people that inhabit those areas of the world, their backgrounds, their cultures, their ethnic origin, their history, their literature, their art.

We know so little about them. We speak for example of Latin America as if it were one country almost, when indeed Latin America consists of at least four separate zones - Mexico, Central America, the upper zone and the lower zone. In the upper zone are Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela. In the lower zone are Chile, Argentina, and Peru. But even there, there are vast differences. The Argentine is a much more Anglo-Germanic oriented country as compared for example to Peru or Venezuela. Indian cultures in some countries are highly predominant and Spanish cultures in others.

What I would like to emphasize to you is that each country in Latin America is as separate and distinct as each country in Europe. Yet we speak with almost intimate knowledge of the differences between France and Germany or the differences between Italy and Norway. I would suggest that we have the same kind of depth and understanding about countries that are so close to us in the very real sense in Latin America.

Now let's transfer ourselves for a while to Asia. Asia isn't a nation. Asia's a name for a continent, and once you have said that, that is about it. From there on out there is the Japanese culture. Japan is a highly industrialized nation and yet with many basic patterns of the past in the fabric of its society, modern industry, and the 20th century. Almost a 20th century, superimposed over an ancient and an aged people. We know very little about China. Now that we are beginning to talk about it maybe we know a little more. China has imposed a kind of self isolation upon itself. China has a Communist regime but it has 750,000,000 people. I don't think you can live very securely in a world and be uninformed about 750,000,000 people.

It isn't whether you like them or not. We don't like many things. We don't particularly care for hurricanes and tornados, but we study them, and we surely don't care for many diseases but we learn about them, because they could be a threat to our lives. I would suggest to my young friends that we start to learn about an area of the world that represents one-fourth the total population of this globe. We are beginning to do that now. We are beginning to talk about it. This doesn't mean that you accept or condone or support their regime. Not at all. It may mean that you have even more vigorous opposition to it than ever once you really learn more about it. But we ought to know. And then once you have moved from Japan and China, Southeast Asia is as different from Japan as Mexico is from Maine. Southeast Asia is different in itself. People of Viet Nam are entirely different from the people of Laos. The people of Viet Nam are a combination of Chinese and Polynesian. The people of Laos are primarily Malaysian. They are very different. The people of India are very different from all of them. Their background is different.

What I am saying to you is that young people of your age have to start to understand the other world. People of my age, and my father before me, studied a great deal about the world of the West, of Europe, little or nothing about Latin America. That is part of our problem there. We have inherited ignorance of our continent and we are paying a dear, dear price for it. Now you have inherited regrettably - because of the failure in our educational structure and our communication media to talk about and write and converse about Asia - you have inherited at best a very limited knowledge about it.



I venture if I go through this room and you give me honest testimony, most of you can't name the capitals of the countries of Asia, much less their political parties, or what it is that motivates them politically, when they gained their independence, what is the composition of their labor force, what kind of an economy do they have, how much industrialization, what's their export trade, who have been their historic enemies, who have been their historic friends, what kind of pressures do they have working upon them, what kind of newspapers do they have, what kind of religions are there. This is what you have to know about your own country.

If a man runs for a political office in the United States, he must know about his State and his district. Whatever you think of a Congressman, Senator, vice president or a governor or a legislator, I'll tell you one thing, he knows all about what's in that district he seeks to represent. He studies it like a doctor studies the body and he knows the weaknesses, and the strengths, the limitations and the hopes and the aspirations. We are going to have to know that about this world or we are not going to live very long in it.

Leadership requires knowledge and depth. Leadership requires a breadth of understanding that is comprehensive. Leadership requires unbelievable perseverance, patience. It requires the long run qualities of endurance, to take it over a long period of time and not to expect quick and immediate results. So I appeal to you as young leaders to know a great deal about the world in which you live. The problems that are finally going to affect this nation are not nearly as much domestic as they are international.

I come from the Midwest, and I venture to say that the future of the Midwest is more intimately tied up in the middle East - with Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Israel. It's much more tied up in that part of the world, than it is in any part of the Midwest. We know a great deal about our own country. We are able to do a great deal about our economic system. We are able to do a great deal here about our political system. We understand ourselves well enough to manage our affairs fairly well. Oh, there are ups and downs, there are difficulties, but they are manageable. Yet the great threat to the Midwest - indeed to the whole of America - might very well be in the Middle East if a war breaks out or if there is tension that erupts into violence that becomes uncontrollable. This is a historic bridge between three continents. It is rich in resources and no longer is there anything that happens anywhere in the world that doesn't affect major powers.

Therefore we are concerned about the stability of the Middle East, and that is why your government has a Foreign Aid Program. That's why we have diplomats. That's why we have a Peace Corps, and that's why we want you to interest yourselves in it and maybe volunteer for international service. This is why we have a Food for Peace program because we have to be interested in the Middle East just to use one segment of that section of the world. What happens in Southeast Asia will have more direct effect upon the future of America than anything that happens in the Southeast United States.

I see my friend here from Georgia. Things are improving all the time. Georgia is a great prosperous state. It is upgrading its education, its health, its industry. There is no doubt that Southeastern United States is going to do very well. It has done well and it has better and brighter days ahead, unless things get completely out of hand in Southeast Asia.

If the Communist power should sweep over the entire area of what is known as Southeast Asia it changes the whole balance of the world. And people in Asia everywhere will start to readjust themselves to this new sweep of power. What do you think would happen in Indonesia that just rid itself of the Chinese controlled Communist party? This is one of the great historic developments of this past year. A country, a fabulously rich country, potentially rich, well over a hundred million people, one of the big countries of the world, was only less than a year ago almost completely under the domination and control of the P K I party which was a communist party controlled essentially out of Peking, or at least influenced out of Peking, China. That's gone. At least it appears to be gone. We didn't do it, the Indonesians did it themselves.

And I want to tell you that's a significant development, but if Southeast Asia should fall into the hands of Communist aggression and aggressors, and Southeast Asia is just next door to Indonesia and literally next door, it will have an effect. Make no mistake about it. And if Indonesia falls into the hands of the Communist powers, it will have an effect on New Zealand and Australia which are just next door. And if Thailand falls into the hands of the Communists, it will have an effect upon the nations just next door, Laos, Burma and India.

So we are involved. Somebody said to me the other day, we shouldn't be involved in Asia. I said, well this is like saying we shouldn't be involved



in the atmosphere. If you are going to live, you are going to be involved in the atmosphere even with all of its smog and pollution. And we are involved. We cannot in any way extricate ourselves nor should we. And since we are involved let's make the most of it.

What do we want? Well, we surely don't want anyone else's country. That's one thing. We start right out on that. We have enough right now to take care of. We surely don't want to establish American power all over the world for our purposes. We don't even want to stake out a sphere influence as such.

What is the prime objective of American foreign policy? The prime objective of American foreign policy is exactly the objective of American domestic policy; self determination -- the right to be yourself, to make something out of your own life yourself. The right to be yourself and to have opportunity to make something out of your life. That's it, that's what we are talking about at home.

That's what we mean when we say freedom. Freedom of choice, meaningful choices, freedom of choice to do something with your life -- and not to have people standing over you beating you on the back or pressing you.

This is what the civil rights movement is all about. To liberate people so they can make something out of their lives. This is what education is all about. Education is a process of emancipation from ignorance and prejudice and fear and from illiteracy. So our domestic goal, our whole goal at home, is to make freedom meaningful. Not only to open the gates of opportunity, but to help people through those gates to self-determination. Internationally that's our goal.

We don't want everybody in America to have the same job. We don't want everybody to look the same way. We don't want everybody to act the same way. We don't want all the women to wear the same hat. That would be something! We don't want everybody to have the same size feet.

We express ourselves as saying we believe in individuality. We believe as President Kennedy once said in making this world safe for diversity. So you can be a little different. This is what we think about America.

Each State has its own way of doing things. This is why we believe in State government. This is why we believe strongly and support voluntary organizations. We don't want the government to run everything. I should say not.

We want people essentially to do things for themselves. And one characteristic of America which is very evident to anyone who sees us is that we are self helpers. We do do things for ourselves. We have more voluntary organizations in America than there are nations in the world -- more national voluntary organizations. They do great work.

So we want to have an America in which there is a mosaic, but in which each piece, while adding something to the beauty and the meaning of the other, is separate. Each is distinct, but each contributes to the total picture, to the panorama of this great republic of ours.

This is what we are talking about internationally, and I want to make it crystal clear the objective of your country is that countries and peoples can chart their own way in life -- that they don't have to have it beaten into them by an oppressor. They don't have to have what the communists call the monolithic structure where it is all the same -- where they all read the same paper, the same doctrine, accept the same philosophy and if you don't like it you are exterminated. We oppose that.

We are not asking that every country have a label on it that says made in the USA, supported by the USA, designed by the USA.

We are asking that each nation and each peoples be given the opportunity to put their own brand label on their own country -- their way of doing things.

This is why we oppose aggression in South Vietnam. We are not there because of a government. There is a lot of talk about the kind of a government they have now.

Our objective is that the Vietnamese may elect their own government. Our objective is that they can write their own constitution. Our objective is that they be left alone to do these things. Our objective is that they build their own lives, design their own future.

But we know that that objective can't be realized if someone is going to be in there with a tommy gun, and hand grenades, and the assassin's bullet and a knife, destroying and killing.

So we are in Southeast Asia today, not for conquest, not for domination, not for trade, not for a sphere of influence. We are there because we believe, and history supports us, that aggression unleashed is aggression unchecked; or aggression unchecked is aggression unleashed.

We are there because we do not believe that the pattern of international conduct should be one of brute force. We do not believe that we should permit political objectives to be realized through brute force and through aggression.

We believe the people ought to have the right to make their own choices in relative peace, and as a great nation, we have a great stake in this.

Big as we are, and great as we are, we are not one that can stand alone against a whole world. We are an island in a sea of discontent. Two-thirds of the world is hungry. Two-thirds is poor. The gap between the rich and the poor grows. And this, I want to say to every one of you in this room, is a threat to

your liberty and your freedom. Just exactly as we found out in our own America, there isn't a city that is safe that has four-fifths rich people and one-fifth poor -- not one city. Because the poor now find out that it doesn't need to be that way.

Modern communication is a tantalizing instrument. Modern communication, television, radio, the ad, the picture book, the beautiful picture in a magazine, but particularly television, has shown to the simplest people, the poorest people, and the most ignorant people that there is something better than what they have. Television has literally changed the politics and the human relations of this world.

So I repeat to you, that a city that is four-fifths rich and one-fifth poor is in danger.

Never was there a revolution conducted by a majority. Violence is the product of an organized, mobilized, indignant, antagonized, angry, skeptical, cynical minority.

We even see this picture now, in a world in which while we have the majority of the wealth, they have the majority of the poverty.

Your country last year produced 50 percent of everything that was produced in this world. Just add that up for a minute. 196 million Americans produced 50 percent of all the goods and services produced in the entire world. The other 3 billion, 2 hundred million people got the other 50 percent.

When anybody ever tells you how bad we have it, just start dividing. Divide up the total gross national product of the world and put 50 percent of it over there for 3 billion, 2 hundred million people and 50 percent over here for less than 2 hundred million. We are the 2 hundred million. We got half of it. The other part of the world got the other half. And they are not happy.

The late Pope John, one of the great churchmen and spiritual leaders of all times, said that the greatest single threat to world peace was the poverty of the world -- the gap between the rich and the poor. I think he is right.

There is another threat to world peace -- racial tension -- poverty, racial misunderstanding, racial tension.

There is another threat to the peace of the world, Communism. And Communism builds on the other two.

Therefore we must resist the overt, outward thrusts of Communist aggression, because, in so doing, we provide a semblance of security. Secondly, we must come to grips with, and face up to the basic tensions that exist between peoples of different ethnic origins, and start to treat people on the basis of individuals and not colors, or religions or ethnic groups. And thirdly, we must lead a world-wide crusade against the poverty that grips most of God's children.

None of these things will be accomplished quickly. None of them will be accomplished easily.

All I can say is, that it is later than you think. We have to get started. There is an old Chinese proverb that says that the first step is the longest journey. Once you make those first steps, the commitments, you are on the road, and you have made a great, great, part of the journey.

We have made some first steps. You have made them in your own interest in the world in which you live. You have involved yourself. The whole 4-H club movement is an international movement and is involved itself. I asked when I came in here how many countries is the IFYE program presently working in. I think about 50.

The Peace Corps of your government has involved itself, and we as a



people now are involved in the lives of other people all over the world. Now other countries are organizing their own Peace Corps.

The fact that we have recognized that in our own midst there are poor, terribly poor, people is a commitment on the part of our own selves to our selves that we are going to do something about this human condition called poverty. And if peoples of the world see that we mean to do something about it here, they may believe that we mean to do something about it there.

So we have taken that first step. We have taken the step of commitment. We have taken the step of involvement. We have taken the step of saying that we are ready to minister rather than to be ministered unto. There isn't a single action that your government or the people of this country take that doesn't have within it something of spirit and almost scriptural. The only way that I know that America can save itself is to save other.

I'm in politics for one reason. It isn't because it's an easy life. I can tell you that. The higher you get into it the less ease. I jokingly say that there was a time that I didn't own a house and didn't have a car. I now have two houses, and I have two cars -- and I can't drive either car, and I never need a house. I used to long for the days-- you know--when we could go to all the big parties. Now there are too many. Wish I didn't go to any. But once you obtain a position in public life, you find out what the responsibilities of leadership really mean. Leadership is not a privilege, it's a duty. It isn't a luxury -- it has a very real sense of burden. Leadership doesn't give you anything but responsibility. And responsibility is not the cloak of comfort.

Our country has the qualities of leadership. Make no mistake about it, if we don't lead somebody else will. There's never been a movement, there's never been a country, there's never been a religion, there's never been a 4-H club, and there's never been a union, or a chamber of commerce that had a void or vacuum of leadership. Somebody leads it -- it just depends upon who that somebody is.

When I was mayor of my city of Minneapolis, I told the decent people in that city: make up your mind. You say your city is crime-ridden. You want to know why? Because you let it be that way. You didn't want to stand up and face up to the responsibilities of confronting the criminal and the racketeer. You were afraid -- you ran away -- you said it isn't affecting your lives. And my dear friends, you can have good government if you want it. But you've got to get involved in it. Because make up your mind right now, government is power and sinister and evil forces like power, and they will take power if you let them.

There is no such thing as a power vacuum. And if the United States of America and the other free nations falter in their leadership, you can rest assured that the communists will take it. They are watching every moment. They will move in any time. They will even keep shoving and pushing you, and, if possible, destroy you.

So I appeal to young people to put away any idea that the days ahead will be easy ones. They will be interesting -- they will be exciting. But there aren't going to be any easy days ahead. You aren't going to land a man on the moon easily. And you are not going to fly from here to Mars -- which we will surely do in your life time -- easily.

Columbus didn't discover America easily. More people died trying to get here than got here in the first 100 years of exploration. Long before Charles Lindbergh ever flew the Atlantic a dozen planes had gone down with brave and good pilots. It wasn't easy. The space program over which I preside as chairman is not an easy program. The men that go into it are carefully selected and highly trained. We almost had a tragic accident with the instruments of the recent Gemini flight and its docking procedure with the Agena. You remember -- it could have been a catastrophe.

It's not easy. So when I hear people say "Oh, we ought to get out,  
to  
we ought to do this, we ought not/be involved" -- those are the people who are the cowards. And this world is not going to be made a better world by people who are unwilling to involve themselves in the world. I thank you for your involvement -- I don't know of any more encouraging sign these days than the 4-H club movement -- and I can say to you very frankly you're going to have the most exciting period ahead of you of any people that ever lived at any time in human history. If I had but one wish to be granted to me,

it is that I could live to be 100. It's not just to have those days, but there is so much that's going to happen. I think we are going to be able to carve these terrible weapons of nuclear power into peaceful uses. I think we are going to learn how to keep a world from destroying itself. I know we are going to have an unbelievable exploration in outer space.

Just think of it, there may be a man in this room right now who will be one of the mechanics who goes on up and repairs a communication satellite in orbit. We can do that in the next three or four years -- battery runs out, solar plates become worn out. You are going to spend millions of dollars to put up a whole new satellite so you can communicate. No. Take a young fellow like that one down there, put him in a space capsule, send him on up there on a space platform just like a big floating laboratory in space, like a university. A great big laboratory out there in space. You live up there 35-40 days, six weeks, three months, half a year, a year, whatever time that modern science designs. You walk out of the door, you go on out some 200 miles above the earth -- you'd be traveling at 18,000 miles an hour, and you'll be up there and say well, my gosh, I've got to put on a new antenna on that communication satellite so Humphrey can get his TV broadcast on over to India. This is going to happen.

Very frankly, right now we are doing most of our communications with India through a communications satellite. Right at this very minute as I speak to you, there are weather reports coming from communication satellites -- automatic pictures coming out of the whole weather system of the whole world. In a few years we will be controlling the weather. It's very possible -- making it rain when we want it to rain. Hopefully

shutting off the rain when it rains too much. People say, "Oh, that's impossible." But nothing is impossible. Nothing. There is an old scriptural saying "Greater things than I have done, ye shall do also." Greater things are being done all the time. All the time. People that have literally been dead, are having their hearts resuscitated -- are being brought back into rhythm and beating -- they live again. We transfer whole organs of the body. We are developing a mechanical heart. I've seen the little battery. We are going to have a mechanical heart that we can put inside a man who has a bad heart. The little atomic cell -- an isotope with its antenna, so to speak, -- as thin and as visible as the hair from your head, and the battery smaller than the little BB of a 20-gauge shot-gun shell placed inside of that mechanical heart to keep that heart in perfect rhythm for 20 years. This is being worked on by the great doctor, Doctor Michael DeBakey. It's on the way. On the way. We'll going to be doing this. Who would have dreamed 15 years ago that you could have heart surgery such as we are having now. These are the miracles yet to come.

But the greatest miracle of all will be when people learn how to live with each other. When they learn how to have peace. And that's the thing to which you dedicate yourself, above all. And I want to tell you something, that it's going to take just as much research, patience and skill and dedication to get that peace we are talking about as it does to produce that mechanical heart, or to put a man on the moon. The trouble is that most people talk about peace, and they think that if we could just get somebody in a room to sign a piece of paper we would get peace. But there isn't any scientist who thinks that's the way we're going to put somebody on the moon. You can't just get him in the room, have him take a



look at the moon, and say now there he is -- he's on the moon. We'll going to spend billions, and billions of dollars and millions of man-hours to get somebody on the moon.

How do we get peace? Through foreign aid, through the United Nations, through food and agriculture, through industrial development, through education, through communication, through disarmament, through cultural exchanges, through understanding -- through people getting to talk to each other, living with one another, knowing more about the world, a thousand and one things. These are the building blocks of peace.

While you are in Washington, I hope that you will go visit our great National Cathedral. And when you see it, remember how long it has taken to build it. And it isn't even half done. If you've travelled to Europe, you take a look at those great cathedrals. They are magnificent. They're man's tribute to divine spirit. They're an expression of man's love of God. A physical expression. A tangible expression. How long do you think it took to build the great cathedrals of Europe? Sometimes centuries. And in this day and age, even with modern machines, it takes generations.

Peace is like a great cathedral. You have to build on good sound foundation, and each generation comes along and adds a few more building blocks. And one day we hope that this magnificent expression of man's true desire for peace, his expression of love for fellowman will come about. And that will be the day when the cathedral of peace has been completed. But there's no use of you saying, "well, it isn't going to be done in my time," because if that had been the case, there would never have been anything built. Your job is to add the building block that you can add. And the building blocks you add are the very things that you are living for now, and they are what you are doing now. So be good builders, and best wishes to you. Thank you.



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