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PRESS CONFERENCE

OF THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HONORABLE

HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

HILTON HOTEL

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

SEPTEMBER 9, 1966



SENATOR ANDERSON: I'm not going to talk. All I am going to do is introduce the Vice President and tell you he is a fine person. He has done very outstanding work in Washington, and we are very happy to have him here. Mr. Hubert Humphrey, our Vice President.

VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Anderson and Senator Montoya and my, I should say our friends of the Press, Radio and Television, I think the best way for us to proceed, if it's agreeable with you, since you undoubtedly do have a text of some of the excerpts of my remarks tonight, is for me to await your questions and I shall try, to the best of my ability, to answer them. So any of you that have questions, why don't you just come forth with it right away. Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, General Maxwell Taylor today suggested that a gradual de-escalation, by both sides, could lead to a negotiated peace in South Viet Nam. Could I have a comment on that remark, please?

VICE PRESIDENT: Well, that surely would be our hope. Every possible step towards an honorable peace will be pursued by the Government of the United States, and in particular by the President of the United States. We surely do not want an escalation of the war in Viet Nam. Our hope would be that it could de-escalate, and to a point where we could arrive at the Conference Table for honorable negotiations.



The Government of the United States has made itself available at all times for negotiations without any conditions or any preconditions and we are prepared to go any place at any time, under any auspices that are neutral auspices, to negotiate and to seek a cessation of hostilities and an understanding that will bring us peace. I think that you can know that General Taylor is one of the trusted advisors of President Johnson.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, in your opinion, what possible effect could the outcome of the elections in Viet Nam have on the war effort?

VICE PRESIDENT: I consider the elections in South Viet Nam to be very, very significant because this struggle in Viet Nam is not only a military struggle, it is a political struggle as well, and we in the United States and the other allies of the South Viet Nam are deeply interested in nation building, the building and the creation of a unified South Viet Nam with democratic institutions.

The election that will take place this coming week will be a very, very important first step in the building of a free democratic Viet Nam with constitutional government. I also think it will mark a very significant defeat for the Communists. The Communists have never had a free election, nor have they ever won a free election on a national basis.



If this election can come off as we expect it will with a substantial number of South Viet Nameese voters going to the polls despite the threats against them and the terrorism which is very evident, it will represent a victory for South Viet Nam and defeat for the Communist forces.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, how do you think the vote is going to -- what's the turnout going to be in Viet Nam this Sunday? Do you think there's going to be a lot of voters, few voters, specially due to the fact of Viet Cong acts of terrorism lately?

VICE PRESIDENT: I think it's very difficult to predict any numbers, but there will be a large number of voters. I would have you remember what happens in the United States in off-year elections. When we do not have presidential elections we are very fortunate here if we get forty-five percent of the electorate to cast a ballot, that's a big vote. I do not want to have that figure interpreted as one that will relate directly to South Viet Nam, I only say this, that there will be a large number of voters and they will run into the millions, and this election will be observed by over four hundred newspaper correspondents from free countries; and I have a feeling that the threats that are being made and carried out by the Viet Cong will arouse a patriotic fervor amongst the people of South Viet Nam so that



the vote will be substantial.

But remember, the country is at war, and remember that every voter is threatened with death, and remember that every polling place is threatened with bombs, hand grenades and mines and rifle fire, and under those conditions it takes a courageous person to cast a vote. That's why I think that this election will be very significant, because I'm confident a very substantial vote will be cast.

QUESTION: Do you feel that the possible reduction of some of our forces in Europe is an indication that the major ideological differences appear to be in the East, as opposed to the Communist ideas, more or less, in the West?

VICE PRESIDENT: Well, your Government has not as yet arrived at any decision for reduction of forces in Western Europe. There has, of course, been discussion of this matter in the Congress, which is entirely proper, because the Congress should be an independent body to carry out its own deliberations, its own consultations, and discussions.

President Johnson has said that any troop reduction that could be contemplated, or any that would be contemplated, should be one that was discussed within the framework of NATO, our partners, and no unilateral action.

It is my view that any potential or possible troop



reduction should also be related to what happens on the other side of the Iron Curtain. I do feel, however, that there is a considerable ferment in Eastern Europe of autonomy and relative independence on the part of Communist Socialist countries, Rumania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia. Of course, Yugoslavia very definitely has early shown signs of independence and has really had independence from the Soviet Orbit, but other countries are beginning to exert their own independence.

I think we ought to encourage this in the sense that we should treat these countries with respect and hopefully that this move towards autonomy and independence of action will continue, and I think it will, I think it's inevitable. And as the movement towards greater independence and autonomy takes place in Europe, our position in Europe becomes just a little easier for us but it's very risky for anyone in the position of any responsibility in the Executive Branch to speak about basic changes in our Military posture, or our foreign policy without full consultation with our Allies. This is something that we can not do, and should not do.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, did you say the other day in Buffalo that there was too much federal interference in local and state governments, and if you did so, would you explain it further?



VICE PRESIDENT: No, I did not say that. What I did say was that the term "creative federalism", which has been coined by political scientists and has been adopted in the vocabulary and the semantics of Washington, means a working partnership amongst the federal, state, and local government in which the state and local governments carry their fair share of the load.

I did say that creative federalism means that government, that programs should be locally planned, locally inspired, locally administered, and that the federal government should not be in the position of domination, but rather in the position of cooperation, and I am quite confident that this is the position of the present administration, of the Johnson administration; most every act that we passed, aid to elementary and secondary education, the poverty program, higher education, I could go through a number of pieces of legislation, place their reliance for the use of the funds, for the administration of the funds, for the planning of the programs, basically in the hands of local and state authorities.

I also did say that it is imperative that local and state authorities update themselves, and in New York I commented upon the fact that they were going to have a new state constitution, which could look to the future, that all



too often local governments are hamstrung by obsolete and antiquated statutory and constitutional provisions, and if we're really going to go at the job of our cities, if we're really going to do the job for our people, we must not just look to Washington, we must look to ourselves at home, in our own cities, our own states, and then call in the federal government with its resources to aid, to supplement, but not to supplant.

QUESTION: Do you expect Mr. Johnson to make a swing through New Mexico during the current political campaign, sir?

VICE PRESIDENT: I couldn't say, but I would hope he could; I know he loves this part of the country, and he has a very high regard for the Congressional Delegation and the Governor. If persuasion and influence from Congress can be effective on the President, I imagine he'd want to be here, just about first, because Guest Clinton Anderson and Senator Montoya, and Congressmen Morris and Walker are loyal, faithful supporters of the broad objectives of the President and personal friends.

I can't, I don't think I ought to hazard a guess, it has a way of making hard news.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, there has been recent Congressional demand for a reserve callup to meet the



Viet Nam man power needs, and there has been no comment that I know of from the Administration. Would you comment on it?

VICE PRESIDENT: I think it would be better that that question were answered by the President thus far, since he is Commander-In-Chief. Thus far, the Administration has not seen a need of any reserve call up. And the President has expressed himself to date on the basis that he saw no such need. But as for what the future would be, one thing that I have learned as Vice President is that you ought not to try to be President.

QUESTION: Do you hope to be President some day?

VICE PRESIDENT: Sir?

QUESTION: Do you hope to be President?

VICE PRESIDENT: I suppose every man lives with hopes and aspirations, but right now, I hope to be a helpful, trustworthy, and effective Vice President. I've learned a long time ago that the best way to look to the future is to do your job that you have today and to try to do it well. I have no such plans, and frankly, not too many people have been talking to me about it.

QUESTION: Do you like your job, sir?

VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, I do. I find the position of Vice President very rewarding, one in terms of experience, acquainting one with the whole apparatus of Government, and



the decision making processes of Government. I particularly find it rewarding in terms of the foreign policy and national security structure of our Government. I love to be with my old friends over in the Senate and the President has given me a number of duties and responsibilities, plus the fact my Space Council Chairmanship, the Chairmanship on the New Council on Oceanography. I'm a busy man, and I like it.

QUESTION: Does that mean you want another term as Vice President, sir? Do you hope to get it?

VICE PRESIDENT: I am going to talk at the proper time to the man that will have an awful lot to say about that, but as yet I haven't bothered him with that.

QUESTION: I see. Mr. Vice President, do you think that the Democrats can maintain their strength in Congress and the Senate?

VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir, I surely do. I think we've got a good record to campaign on, I think we not only have a record to campaign on, I think we have a record of performance.

QUESTION: Do you envision any problems in New Mexico?

VICE PRESIDENT: Not that I see; it looks very good here, for not only the Democratic Party, but for the people of New Mexico, and the two kind of go together.



QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, the Administration yesterday announced several proposals for halting a spiral of inflation; can you say, or is there any indication when you might start to show some results and if it doesn't show results, what might be in the wind in the future?

VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think it would be very helpful for me to speculate as to what might be done in the future; because one just doesn't know what the future will require, and speculation about a highly sensitive active economy can have less than favorable results. The President has said that he will take whatever steps he believes is necessary after consultation with his advisors, both in the Government and in the private sector to thwart any inflation that could weaken or seriously weaken this economy.

The steps that have been taken, or have been advocated by the President are measured and reasoned and limited steps. The reason for that is that our economy is basically healthy. There are indications of inflationary pressures at work, but in the main, the economy is strong, healthy and stable.

To give you one figure that may be of interest to you, the rise in the cost of living, or the increase in the cost of living index, between 1956 and 1961 was about one point higher than between 1961 and 1966, July, 1966.



In other words, the cost of living index has not gone up quite as much in the last five years as it did in the previous five years, from '56 to '61. We are not underestimating, however, the high rate of capital expenditures, the high interest rates, which, of course, relates to the shortage of available money. We know that the economy is growing rapidly but most signs in the economy are good. Productivity of workers is up, the income of workers is keeping a healthy balance with the rise in the cost of living.

Farm income is up greatly; in fact, this will be one of the best years that our farmers should have. Profits of corporations are very high, dividends are good. So, thus far, there's nothing to be frightened about, but we in this Administration believe that it is better to keep a watchful eye over a very active economy now, than to have to have tears in our eyes about a sick economy later on, so we're administering limited doses of preventive medicine. That's what the President's message was about.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, there have been indications from polls published in recent months that the administration is losing popularity in the image among the people. Do you feel that these polls are, in reality, correct?

VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, I think that the polls are



reasonably accurate, it's sort of like the weather in Minnesota in December and January, it gets a little cool, but we have warm summers, beautiful springs and lovely falls. I think that an administration goes through these ups and downs, it's sort of political seasonal developments. This is the second year of the Johnson-Humphrey administration. We've been around quite a good bit and we've been right active, and sometimes people become a little weary of you, but when they have to make the choice between what we are, and what the others offer, there is a degree of regained popularity, because you see, it isn't a choice between perfection and imperfection, it's a choice between Democrats and Republicans. It's a choice between our policies and those that are offered, if any, by the opposition, but I do not discount the fact that there has been some drop in the so-called popularity, but it comes and it goes, and I want to say that if a mother took the temperature of a child every time the child seemed to have a little disturbance, that child would be a very, very sick one in a short order and the mother would be a nervous wreck. Now we are not going to be taking our political temperature every time that we get a little hiccup or every time that somebody says that we don't look good.

The time to really be concerned about these matters



is when the people are called upon to make that big choice, and that big choice will be in 1968. In the meantime there's an intermediate choice, but I am one of those that believes that Congressmen and Senators and Governors run pretty much on their own record as well, of course, as the administrations. The administrations record does affect them, and I hope that our record has been helpful, because men like Senator Anderson, for example, have helped make this administration record. I don't know how we can properly praise a man of his stature. I have done it in Washington. I don't think many of you people heard me do it, but the adoption of the Medicare measure, if he had never done anything else in his life but to sponsor that and successfully put it through the Congress, he deserves a place in the Hall of Fame. And I can think of a host of measures in the field conservation and many others that relate to the economic and social development of this country, so we think we've got a pretty good record and we are not going to be the fair-haired boy and always have people just be delighted with our every move, because we have to make decisions, but I have a feeling when we come around to election time you'll vote for us, I hope.

QUESTION: Senator Dirksen said today that in his opinion the Civil Rights Bill is dead for this session of Congress. Will you comment on that?



VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I will comment on it.

Senator Dirksen could bring it back to life. It's in his hands to breathe life into the Civil Rights Bill, now if he wants responsibility for its death, for its untimely death, then he will have to live with that responsibility, and I happen to think a great deal of Senator Dirksen, and I say here publicly what I have said to him privately, that I hope that he will find it within his conscience and his political conviction and his great political ability to support the Civil Rights Bill. It's good legislation, it's needed legislation, and if Senator Dirksen will just say the word on his side of the aisle, I will guarantee you from this platform that with Senator Anderson and Senator Montoya, with the leadership of Senator Mansfield and with what help the President and Vice President can get we can break any filibuster, we can pass a very good Civil Rights Bill, so let's all hope that Senator Dirksen will get the message, I want you to send it to him, and tell him that if ever there was a chance for a man to breathe life into urgently needed legislation, that chance is his and what an opportunity he has to make history, great history.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, did these Atlanta Civil Rights demonstrations surprise you at all and what are your comments about the Atlanta Mayor climbing up on the car?



VICE PRESIDENT: They didn't surprise me because I happen to believe that the Mayor Ivan Allen of Atlanta is one of the most talented, progressive, courageous public servants in the United States. I know him well and I'm very fond of him. In fact, I consider him an extremely able, gifted, totally unbigoted, tolerant, nondiscriminatory Mayor. He hasn't a bit of racism in his heart or in his actions or in his mind and Atlanta has made a substantial progress. It's really been one of the bright spots of the Nation.

And therefore, I was very much upset when I learned of the riots and the lawlessness and I think the Mayor was very courageous. As a matter of fact, I would recommend that every one of us that have responsibility when these things, disorders take place, that we proceed to the scene of battle, so to speak, to the scene of trouble.

The Mayor went right out there and asked the people to abide by the law, to stop their looting, rioting and disorder. There was some outside interference and I personally called Mayor Allen; I don't know if you know that. It was on their local radio stations, they asked if it was all right to put it on the beeper. I said, "Well, I have nothing to say to him privately that I won't say publically," and here is what I said: I said, "Mr. Mayor, you have given service beyond the call of duty. If there is a hero in America today, you are



that hero. And secondly, I think your Police Department conducted itself with restraint and I want to say right here that these problems are not settled by rioting, disorder, lawlessness, burning."

This is not the American way, this is not the way you get things done and it's unnecessary. Peaceful demonstration, yes, peaceful protest, yes, peaceful assembly, yes, peaceful marchers, yes, they are entitled to protection of the law, but when people come in to incite and to agitate, to riot and disorder, that is a violation of law. It has to be condemned, it cannot be tolerated, and I think the Mayor of Atlanta and his law enforcement officers did what was right.

Now, that doesn't mean they solved all their problems and I think what we are learning out of this is there are many, many injustices yet to be corrected and many needs in our cities, but innocent people are hurt and by the way, the American Negro population is not an unruly, disorderly population.

The American Negro has been a long-suffering, patient citizen and there is but a handful of people that cause this trouble and I don't want to see that little handful that get out of hand, that become lawless and engage in disorder and violence represent the overwhelming majority of the wonderfully, fine, good, patriotic, decent, tolerant, ever-patient American



Negro citizen.

And that is, I'm afraid, what is beginning to happen, that many people are starting to criticize whole groups of Americans because of the activities of a few and I want this platform to record my sincere, heartfelt feeling about the American Negro. He's suffered a long time, he's waited a long time for his chance and he is still willing to work with the established law abiding citizen, established institutions of Government. He wants to work with us.

And these few that get out of hand, these few do not represent the millions of Americans that are good, patriotic citizens. And some of them are in Viet Nam and many of them are doing a great work in this country in industry and agriculture and education and medicine and law. I think we ought to salute them and I hope sometime we can put it all in proper perspective.

QUESTION: Along the same line, if I might ask two questions in a row. According to your answer there, do you feel then that outside agitation is responsible for a good number of the major riots that are taking place?

VICE PRESIDENT: I think there's been evidence of outside agitation in some of these areas and there certainly was in Atlanta and I think there was some in Chicago. I happen to know that the mayor of Chicago is a dedicated public



servant, and if anyone is interested in the poor it's Richard Daley. He comes from poor people himself, he lives in a poor neighborhood and he's not a well-to-do man and he's filled with a desire of seeing a better city and better opportunities for people.

QUESTION: Do you have any definite source of where this agitation comes from, is it left wing?

VICE PRESIDENT: I think the law authorities in Atlanta have already indicated where they think that some of it comes from and I prefer to let the courts decide that.

QUESTION: Thank you very much.





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