

Excerpts
from an Address
by the Vice President
HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

International Conference of the
Public Personnel Association



October 26, 1966
Statler-Hilton Hotel
Washington, D. C.

All of us here are public servants -- you through the merit system or appointment, and I as an elected officer. Nevertheless, we serve the public, and I know of no greater service that one can do in a free country -- in a democracy -- than to serve the people. Lincoln's definition of our Government "of the people, by the people, and for the people" covers it all. You are obviously of the people; you are here by the people; and the people would like to believe that you are here for the people. They would like to believe that of the President and the Vice President, Members of Congress, and the entire area that we call the Bureaucracy.

The word bureaucracy has been taken and interpreted as if it were an evil force. In fact what it represents is the machinery of Government, the apparatus of public service. So when I use that term, I use it in the most respectful manner.

Public administration has become not only a necessary adjunct of Government; it is increasingly a vital force in the life of a free society. Here in our own nation there are nearly 11 million working in governmental services of some form or another. Public administration has become a constructive force in shaping how the world's work gets done,

from the U. N. Secretariat on down to the small suburban municipality, even to the township level. And I might add that it is also an instrument that determines the success or the failure of programs critical to the democratic way of life.

Need is Ever Increasing

Let's think about two aspects of manpower resources for the international and domestic responsibilities that we bear.

First, on the domestic aspect. Local and state government has grown much more rapidly in these post-war years than Federal government. These areas of government have grown in their responsibilities and their services because the people expect more from their government. Also, the country has grown. I remember when I first came to Washington in 1949, the population of the nation was about 150 million. Now the nation's population is close to 200 million.

This is a fast growing country, and an even faster growing world. Because of this growth in population as well as in the variety of changes that have taken place in our social and economic structure, there is an ever increasing need for trained, skilled, experienced, and dedicated manpower in the field of public service. Just as we have shortages today in some of the skills and professions in the private sector, so we have shortages in the skills and professions in the public sector.

President Johnson is keenly aware of this. I know that he has in mind programs which he hopes will aid the states and localities in developing better managerial, technical, scientific, and professional talent to serve at those levels; to help, for example, universities to prepare students for public service, and to strengthen public personnel administration everywhere throughout the land.

We Seek to Cooperate

I must say, as one who has been a legislator, that many of the programs which we now have will succeed or fail not on the basis of the written law or even the interpretation of that legislation but upon the basis of administration. And these programs cannot possibly be administered out of one central point. The concept of government which this administration adheres to is what has been termed "Creative Federalism." Creative Federalism, in simple terms, means a working partnership between the Federal, state and local governments. It also means that the initiative, the real push for the development, the administration, the adjustment, and indeed even the application and the expansion of programs must be at the local level. Planning at the local level means the adjustment of a national program to the needs of a particular locality.

Our country is vast and anyone in Washington who thinks that he can legislate a program for every part of the nation on a uniform basis, as if the nation

could be put in a mold, should leave town, because you can't do it. You can have Federal standards, you can have Federal criteria, or you can have Federal aid, Federal funds, and Federal technicians, but ultimately these programs will succeed or fail by the capacity of local officers to adjust them, to apply them to the particular situation which relates to the area in which you live. This is what we mean by partnership.

The Federal government should not, and does not, seek to dominate; it seeks to cooperate. The Federal government does not, and should not, seek to supplant local and state initiative; it seeks to supplement. From the War on Poverty to the many programs in the Departments of Health, Education and Welfare and Housing and Urban Development to the programs that you find in the Departments of Agriculture, Labor, and Commerce depend in large measure on what kind of administration is applied at the local levels.

We Need to Communicate

If there is any one weakness of our present operation, I would say it is this: We have not done enough consultation with the respective levels of government, but we are remedying that. As you know, I am the President's liaison officer with mayors and local officials. We have had 16 meetings thus far this past two years with the mayors of cities down to 30,000 population. We will now go into the regional meetings, so that we can

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You talk about an information gap: -- the greatest information gap in the United States today is between the areas of the government. We have more programs relating to cities, more programs relating to urban affairs than most people can count, but we also have a large number of people that don't know what the programs are, who is in charge, how they operate, or how you even get at it. Now this is what we call a real information gap. We have to close that gap. And we're beginning to do it with governors conferences where Federal officials appear, not as just speakers, but in a seminar situation. In our mayors conferences where we have meetings that last two days at a time, we have cabinet officials, under secretaries, and agency heads explain their programs and what they seek to accomplish and how they can be put to work.

We're beginning to find out that it's a good idea for us to confer with state legislative leaders, because without exception, or with few exceptions, the Federal programs that we have today require some kind of complementary legislation on the part of the state or the city.

I believe that one of the things a public administrator needs to keep in mind is that the real power

in this country is not in the President or in a Governor, but in the Congress and in the State Legislatures. They may be difficult, but so are you, so am I, and we need to get to know each other. I think the real mistake thus far made in the area of public administration is that there has never been a real meeting of the minds, a complete understanding or at least a reasonable understanding between what the legislators think is the intent of the law. So we're going to try to patch that up. It's going to take some doing. This is what I mean, trying to make these programs work. We have such a variety of programs today that people are almost overwhelmed by them.

Provide Information

If I were to make one constructive recommendation for all of us, it is this: Let's get acquainted with what we have, even as we think about what more we need. I don't mean one or the other; I think we need to do both. I am of the opinion that most of the Great Society programs today require an intensive examination, an intensive assimilation and digestion by the Federal, state, and local officers to whom these programs have been entrusted for administration.

I know that I'm talking to the wrong people here, because the fact you're here indicates that you know what you want to do. But when I find, for example, that states, or local school districts, which are sorely in need of Federal aid to education

haven't even applied for some of it, because they didn't know how, I say we've got a job to do. And when I find that you go into an area where there is a great need for certain types of health programs and you find out that they haven't even applied, I say there must be something wrong.

We made an examination not long ago of one area of Massachusetts where we found 32 separate programs relating to one particular county, all in the field of health, and most of them seemed to touch one another. This is a problem of reorganization, of elimination of duplication. Basically, it's a problem of providing information for those who need these programs and to assist them to make wise choices. We must know enough about these programs so that our selections produce optimum results. I hope that my point is clear, that the success or the failure of the most dramatic effort that's ever been made in the improvement of the living conditions of the American people is in your hands, and in the hands of those who stand beside you.

Management Key Factor

Now let me give you one other point. Elected officials should not be the only ones that are enthusiastic about their creations. I think it's important for people who administer programs to be even more enthusiastic about them than those who created them. And to impart some of that enthusiasm and some of that dedication to the person that walks in

the door. The administration of programs should be more than a job; it should be a job in which you feel a deep sense of commitment, in which you have a sense of involvement, where, in a very real sense, you're looking for customers, not them looking for you.

If people would become as excited, if they would become as determined about doing something about man's living conditions as they are about traffic conditions, I think we'd have much better neighborhoods.

Public policy is a void, a vacuum and a fraud unless it is properly administered. And you are the front line fighters in this war against poverty, in this effort to make this a better country.

Now let's just say a word on the international field. There's a great need for international public service. We are sorely in need of more and more trained manpower in our international agencies, just as most of the developing countries are in desperate need of trained manpower for the operation of their government. There isn't enough money in the world to build a country that is backward and underdeveloped or developing, whatever term you wish to use, unless you have the manpower, the managerial skills in that country to manage it -- management in corporate structure, management in business, management in trade unions, management in foreign problems, management in universities, management in government. This is the difference between success and failure,

between excellence and mediocrity, between nothing and something.

Dedication Needed

Public administration is no longer just a political matter for people in politics to be concerned about. Public administration represents a working force of organized society. Our public administration at all levels needs to be better acquainted with each level; there needs to be, for example, intergovernmental cooperation in recruiting and in training and in all the practices of public administration. Learn from each other, exchange ideas! I know, for example, in our Federal agencies we now have the Executive Boards, but we need to have more than that. We need Federal, state and local people working together in every community where there are Federal officials and local and state officials; and we need to have a constant upgrading in every way, in salaries, in qualifications, in standards, and in training of local and state personnel.

Not only do we need the manpower and the skills but we need the dedication. And we need to understand that public administration now at home affects everything that we do internationally. Most of our great international services are drawn right out of the local public administration structure. If we have problems here at home making programs work, with the tools and the resources that we have here, in the areas of our slums and our poor,

imagine what problems they have in other places in the world where they have much less in terms of quantity and quality of manpower.

Unite Different Forces

If there's one thing that I've been proud of in President Johnson's Administration it's the manner in which he insists upon greater productivity per man hour, greater productivity per Federal dollar. At every Cabinet meeting somebody has to answer: "What have you done with productivity in your department? What have you done to tighten up programs, to eliminate old programs, to assimilate another program? How can you do this without adding more manpower, how can you get more productivity out of each worker that you have, each professional person, each technician?" We've taken on immense new burdens without greatly expanding the civilian payroll, thereby giving the American people a better value and a better service for the taxpayers' dollars.

I have come to understand in the years of service in the Government that what seemed to me to be a rather academic subject in a course of studies is now really the very flesh and bone, the very basis of what we seek to do in Government. Nothing is better than the way it works, and the only way that something can work is if you make it work.

So I charge you with the responsibility of helping us upgrade not only the quality of your

service but the quality of American life. I think you can do it, if you'll just extend your hand to another person that's in the same field of endeavor or that is in a related field, if you'll emphasize interdisciplinary activities, trying to unite different forces for common objectives and against common difficulties and needs. Thank you very much.

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