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a Transcript

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

I gather that this is a rather informal hour and there is no need for the spokesman to pretend he is going to give a major speech. At this particular hour of the morning, I prefer just to visit; sort of a continuation of the visit over the coffee cup that I had with Mrs. Humphrey this morning.

When I was being asked to sign a card, I was given a pen that had red ink and I said, "That's a familiar color." Mrs. Humphrey has been buying furniture and carpets. We just moved. And I see the bills accumulating.

I can't over-emphasize to you what I believe to be the importance of these gatherings. Some of you around the table I have met before, and others that are not here, have been at other conferences.

I have long felt, ever since I served in the United States Senate, that one of the voids, one of the areas of weakness in much of our human relations program was with the Spanish Speaking community, the Puerto Rican and Mexican American group.

One of the first measures I interested myself in as a Senator was the migrant labor issue; and my old friend, Archbishop Lucey, down at San Antonio, was one of my first witnesses when I was chairman of a Subcommittee on Labor and Public Welfare.

Now I know the good churchman is a controversial man, but he is the kind of fireball that I like. He gets right at some of the problems that confront us.

When we speak of deprivation and poverty and lack of opportunity in this country, we are not speaking of any one particular group. It doesn't make a great deal of difference what your ethnic background may be. When you are poor, you are poor; and when you are uneducated, you are the victim of the lack of an education; and if you live in a slum -- rural or urban -- you are living in conditions that Americans ought not to have to endure.

But I think it is fair to say that too little attention has been paid to the Spanish speaking American, to the Mexican American, and all too often to the Puerto Rican American. We are all Americans, and I find it difficult to even use the other terms. I have traveled a great deal in the Southwest. I have been in the communities where many of

our Spanish speaking people live, and it is obvious that the Government of the United States has been late in realizing that there are serious problems in these areas.

I am being very candid. I don't know whether anybody is going to like what I say or not. But I came to the conclusion a long time ago that it was better to get to the point than to gloss over it.

Now you have had, I don't know how many sessions of these planning groups. I hope that these are more than just planning groups. I hope that while you are here you will plan ahead for further conferences. What kind they will be, I don't know. I don't know whether we should plan a national conference, a regional conference, or a White House conference. Very frankly, the title is less important than what happens.

I have attended all sorts of conferences, and all too often they end up with big publications, and far too little action. I make a suggestion to you -- that while you are here in these meetings, you let the people of the Federal Government know what you expect them to do in cooperation with state and local government and private enterprise. Now let me tell you why I made that rather lengthy statement.

The Federal Government programs today, large as they are -- and they are very big and very numerous -- those programs alone cannot do the job that you and I want done in improving the housing, the job opportunities, the education, the health of our people. Those programs are based upon cooperative action with state and local government, and the involvement of private groups and individuals.

Once again, speaking with great candor, the Federal Government is way out ahead in terms of the number of programs that we have. We have so many programs that most of us don't even know which ones we have, including those of us who are in the government.

I have been in charge of what we call the President's liaison with local government officials. I see some of my mayor friends here. When I started this program at the request of President Johnson two years ago, we first had a meeting with all the mayors of the major cities, the really big ones. Then we met with the mayors from cities of one million and above. Then we had them from 500,000 to one million, then from 100,000 to 500,000, then from 50,000 to 100,000, and now from 30,000 to 50,000. We have had 16 of these meetings.

When we brought these mayors in, even from the biggest cities where they have large personal staffs, most of them didn't know what programs, and certainly were not aware of all the programs that were

available, and that there were funds available for their localities. It was very much like the Federal Government being a huge supermarket. You walked in the door and there were all the commodities on the shelf but without labels. No one even knew which aisle to go down, much less what he was going to find when he picked up a package. So we have been doing some labeling.

We have gotten together, and some of you ought to have this information -- at least the municipal officials should have it. We have a book of what we call Community Programs, listing the Federal programs that are available for every community. It identifies the program by name, title, authorization, the amount of money appropriated, how you apply for it, what you have to do to get it and who is in charge of it in Washington and out in the regions; it even gives telephone numbers.

Then it also tells you that if you can't get the person that you are looking for there, you can call up either the Office of Economic Opportunity or the Vice President's office, and I will guarantee we will get them on the phone for you. We even went so far as to simplify -- this is for local officials now -- the application, because many times there is difficulty in getting the right application for the right project. So we have one general application now. You just mail it to Washington and somebody finds out where it goes. We have done that much.

What I am trying to tell you is there is a great deal that has been done federally. Many of these programs have not been used effectively, and the reason they haven't been properly used is that we haven't been able to communicate well enough to inform the people that really need these programs and the communities that ought to be working with these programs, what they are all about. That is one of the reasons I travel around the country a great deal. I go talk to mayors, county commissioners, city councilmen, governors, state legislators, and show them, with a little help on their part, what you can get from the federal programs, from the federal bank, so to speak, of these great programs.

Now we haven't done nearly enough. I don't want anybody to think that simply because we have done more than anybody else has ever done, and we have -- the 89th Congress was a fabulous Congress -- we can rest on our laurels. Nevertheless, what we have done is a beginning.

So while you are here, and you are talking about these matters, I think that you ought to speak very candidly about the different departments of government and what you believe they are doing or not doing; what you think they can do.

Let me give you a few examples of what I think you ought

to be talking about. One of the great needs in America today is low-cost, low-rent, low-income housing. Now you and I know that that is possibly the number one primary social need in the nation today. You couple that with education. Now we have done a lot in education. You know how we have been able to do it? Through an aroused public opinion. We have federal aid to education in amounts today that were never believed possible a few years ago. Billions of dollars go into federal aid to education. In fact, the Congress wants to over-appropriate, even more than we know how to spend. You have to go to Congress now and tell them not to go too fast. So we have broken through.

But when I came to the Senate in 1949, the first bill I ever voted on was federal aid to education. It passed the Senate and they killed it in the House. Two years later it passed the House and they killed it in the Senate. You know, sort of like tennis. They hit the net every other time. Both times they killed it on the basis of religion or race, one or the other. The demagogues would either kill it on the basis of the church or on the basis of the Negro, and nobody got any federal aid to education.

I was the author of the Federal Aid to School Construction Bill. That is the first federal aid bill of the many that were subsequently passed in 1950. That was for those areas that had a large amount of federal activity, where there were defense plants, where there were military reservations, et cetera, and over \$3 billion went into that program.

Then we got the National Defense Education Act. I was a co-author of that act, so I know a little bit about this. Then finally we got the Federal Aid to Education Act and I was the floor manager, not of that bill but the Majority Whip that saw the bill get through. The schools were over-crowded, you will remember. They didn't have classroom space right after World War II. They talked about the World War II baby crop. Well, it hasn't quit. I'll tell you the baby crop is still good around the country, and if you don't believe it, you just travel with me and go around and see the folks. There are children all over the place, and that is good.

But we need to get the same kind of public concern about decent housing for our people, jobs and job training for our people, that we have had about education, and continue our work in education as well.

I can think of a lot of things that we ought to work on, but my dear friends, until we find places for people to live decently, until we have some open spaces in our cities -- there is going to be a lack of opportunity. Our large cities simply have to be rebuilt from within.

Now they don't all have to be torn down. Some of them have to be rehabilitated. I think there are some people who feel we ought

to run a bulldozer through our cities and clean them out. We have seen a lot of that. But where did the people go? Nobody paid any attention to that. Well, we can't let that happen either. So we need neighborhood rehabilitation. We have rent supplements now for the low-income family, but we are going to have to come to a program one of these days pretty much like REA, Rural Electric.

My dear friends, the farmers of America would still be using kerosene lamps had it not been for rural electrification. And what did that amount to? That amounted to a kind of federal bank with low-interest, long term loans, two per cent money, 30 to 40 years to repay, and that is the way we got electricity for the farmer. And what did it do? It increased the value of all the farm land. It increased agricultural productivity. It made life worth living on the farm. It increased agricultural efficiency. It was a godsend. And one of these days we are going to have to do some of the same things in the area of housing development.

Now I have been a man that has been involved in foreign policy in your government for a long time. I think we have to start to deal with our poor people, our needy people, just exactly as we do with needy nations and poor people overseas. I don't think we ought to be any more generous with people in Africa, Asia and Latin America than we are with people at home, and I don't mean any less generous either.

But what do we do when we have a problem overseas? For example, if you lived in Colombia, or if you lived in Venezuela, or Peru, you would get if you were an American private businessman going into that area, a government guaranteed loan. When you invest, your investments are guaranteed so that you help make jobs for the people in that country. Well, now why can't we have the same standard applied in the United States? If there is a poverty area, a slum area, why can't we encourage the businessman to put a factory or a shop in that particular area, and have some kind of an investment guarantee? Certainly this would be better than trying to transport people 50 miles to a job.

I think that is what we have got to come to. This business of thinking that everybody ought to spend half of his life in a bus doesn't make much sense. I think instead of taking the people to a construction site, we must take the construction site and its jobs to the people. We can do this.

We ought to have the same kind of interest in technical assistance. I have been out in Mexican American territory where there was no real fresh drinking water -- in the United States! And some of you people know that. It is unbelievable that in the United States there shouldn't be fresh drinking water. Nobody ought to have to have a problem like that in this modern country.

I guess I can just simply tell you that every problem that you have an interest in, I have an equal interest in and not just a superficial one. I happen to believe that the Great Society that we talk about is no better than its weakest member. I think you have to lift it up from the bottom. It doesn't do any good just to build these great big commercial office buildings that glisten in the sun and have the slums in the shadow.

We have to state some priorities in this country. Now I happen to think that you can build office buildings and improve housing conditions, too. But we tear down buildings in New York City that are better than most buildings in any place in the world to put up new office buildings because they can make more money per square foot. I am not going to say that is wrong. I don't know. I am not that good a businessman. The only thing I know is that if you can go into Fifth Avenue or if you can go into Madison Avenue in New York and tear out a half a block that is worth millions of dollars in order to put up another new beautiful glass building, why can't you go in and put in some low-income housing? It doesn't need to be too low-income either, because we ought to raise incomes.

One of the reasons I like private housing with rent supplements is that it permits you to raise incomes. One of the real tragedies of public housing is that the minute you get enough income so that you can live like a human being, they tell you you can't live in the public housing project any more. You have got to get out. So there is a premium on staying poor, so you can have a decent place in which to live. That is nuts, to put it bluntly, and I am in the government! I think it is plain ridiculous.

Since that seems to be the law, and I can't do much about it, there is only one way to do it and that is to get a new law. We have got one now called Rent Supplements, which permits the building of private housing, and you can live in that private housing as a poor family. If you can't pay the rent, you get a rent supplement; and when you earn enough income so you can pay the rent, you can still stay there and don't have to be moved. If you hate to move as much as I do, you will know what I mean.

There are things that we can do. I think what we need to do, and may I just conclude on this note, is to pick a few things that we want to do.

One of the dangers of conferences, my friends, is that you try to do everything by resolution. I believe in targeting in on a few things. I have seen many a man lose an election because he thought he ought to go to every county. Sometimes, as I use to say out my way, you are chasing gophers instead of people.

I can get more people in one ward in Minneapolis than I can in four counties in northern Minnesota. We are interested in People, not just their landscape, and you have to be interested in a limited number of subjects, in order to get anything done.

Now you can show that you have some knowledge of the other subjects, but pick your priorities. Now, what do you think are the priorities? What do you think that your government, and it is your government, ought to do? What would you put at the head of the list? What do the people that you represent feel is their number one need? What do they feel is their crying injustice? What is it that they need to gain dignity and self respect?

That is really what we are talking about, not just money. If it were just money, they could all be put on relief, but people don't want to be on relief. They want more than a check. They want to feel that somehow or another they are accepted and amount to something and are somebody.

Now what do we have to do to make that great dream come true? How do we begin? I don't think anybody can answer that any better than the people who live with those who are so concerned. This is one of the reasons I have always believed that Washington never had all the answers.

I know a little bit about my farm people out in the Midwest -- a lot more than a lot of people down here who write about them know. I lived through a depression. I don't need to have any lectures about agricultural economics. I used to say I learned more economics in one South Dakota dust storm than I learned in seven years at the university, and I did. I don't need to be told about the problems of small towns, because I lived in them; and I don't need to be told about the problems of what it means to be poor, because I have been poor; and I don't like it.

I think what we need from you is candor without rancor. I think we need from you priorities without asking for "pie in the sky." I think we need from you a full interpretation, an honest interpretation of the people that you represent.

Tell your government. Put it in the record. That is what this gentleman is here for, the printed record. Put in the record what your people are really crying out for. What do they need? And they need a whole lot more than just what we have been talking about.

Well, that is my concern, and I want to help you. That is the only reason I am in government. I don't think some people need much help. You know Franklin Roosevelt once said that the purpose of government is not to help those who already have too much to get more, but the

purpose of government is to help those who have too little to have enough. In other words, help the least of these, and if we get at that central point, I think we will have made some progress.

Any time you want a conference with the Vice President in attendance, I am available. If you need somebody to be your expediter, if you need somebody that is willing to walk right in and kind of jar the furniture a bit, I am available. Vice Presidents don't have much authority, but they have time.

(Laughter, applause)

And this Vice President has energy. And I have a willingness to help.

I am going to run along in a moment here unless you have some questions. Yes, sir.

DR. GARCIA: Mr. Vice President, I am Dr. Hector Garcia of the American G. I. Forum, and I agree with everything you have said. I certainly say this. From my viewpoint we are planning conferences and we have future conferences and I do desire them. However, as of last year, we have petitioned the Administration to give information on the specific points that you have requested, and I will give you a copy of these points which basically have been representation at policy making levels in all departments of the Executive Branch, Departments of Agriculture, Labor, Defense, State, Post Office and others.

We have also requested commissioner membership in the Civil Rights Commission, in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and also in the Civil Service Commission. We have requested that you, the administrator, use more of our talent in the Department of State, certainly Latin American affairs, the Agency for International Development, the United States Information Agency, and all operations of Latin America in Washington.

We have also requested that we have a Mexican American on the White House staff to bring you gentlemen our problems, and with your kind permission, I will give you a copy of our petition that we have had before the Administration for almost a year.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Yes, sir. I am familiar -- you and I have worked together before.

DR. GARCIA: Yes, sir.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: And I want to say that I think much of what you have asked is appropriate and proper. Much of it is

underway. I can tell you that the President has bent himself, given himself to the fulfillment of these objectives.

Let me just again be very candid. We need rosters of competent people. It is not to your advantage to have anyone appointed to any job that can't carry his fair share of the load. That is Number One. And I know there are plenty of people.

Don't misunderstand me. But I have this problem in my own office. Every once in awhile the President will say to me, "Are you getting any of your people appointed, Mr. Vice President, to anything?" and I will say, "Well, I don't know," and then the President will say, "Now, Mr. Vice President, give me the names of several people that you think we ought to have." And I go back over to my office with all of my brain trusters, and I say "Where are those names? You know you are always talking about jobs and everything, but where are the names?" -- and they don't have them. Now I am talking about my office, not about you.

What I think we need to have in all of these areas, and this is something that can come out of these preliminary meetings, is, literally, a roster of top scientists, doctors, lawyers, specialists in these different things, agriculturalists, and so forth. And then let's face up to another problem.

Every time that there is what we call a minority group, there is a conflict of leadership. We know that, and we have to be willing, it seems to me, to come to some understanding amongst the groups as to the acceptability of the one that is to be selected or appointed.

Now I had a small job once called Mayor of Minneapolis, and I used to ask, for example, when my friends in the labor movement would say "I want you to appoint so and so." -- "No, now wait a minute. If you want him appointed you get elected Mayor. But I'll tell you what I will do. You give me a list of five, or you give me a list of three that is acceptable, and I will pick one out of that. But don't just give me Mr. Jones or Sally somebody. Give me a list."

Now I think this is one of the things that we need in reference to what has been pointed out here, and we can get it done. I don't think we have put enough emphasis on this. I agree with you, and particularly as it relates to our Foreign Aid Program.

We have done much better of late. In the last year we have done better, in the last couple of years, but we can do better.

MR. HERNANDEZ: Mr. Vice President, may the record reflect the Mexican American leaders who are gathered here this morning want

affirmative action taken as a result of this conference, and perhaps recognizing the things that you have pointed out, we have singled out two phases that we want considered by this conference here today, and they are, namely, employment and housing, some of the things that you have pointed out today, and those other things related directly to employment and housing.

We feel that by presenting these concrete recommendations, we may have something that will be beneficial to the government in helping us solve our problems as reflected by all these people who have traveled so far to bring to your attention.

MR. NORTH: Miss Anguiano.

MISS ANGUIANO: Mr. Vice President

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Yes, ma'am.

MISS ANGUIANO: In going back to the remarks that you made about education, I think that in California we are very frustrated by all the money that is going into California for education, and that that money is not being wisely used because the educational system. The money is going to the school which even after they have received all of this money, is still producing a 28 per cent dropout. And, something has to be done in the area of recognizing the educational leadership in our community to enable the changes that have to be made in that school to come about. You know, the school system is a very hard institution to buck.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Yes.

MISS ANGUIANO: And I wish to make a further remark, and that is that in considering organizations of representation to help us solve the problems, that consideration, very careful consideration should be given in the regional leadership.

In all sincerity, I feel that the tremendous leadership in Texas; for example, the organizations that are very well organized in Texas, are not organized in California or in Colorado, and one of the mistakes that the Government has made is that they give a blanket recognition to one organization, and in reality it is not a nation-wide organization to deal with Mexican American problems. It is a very serious one.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I understand that point.

On the education point, let me just lay this out for you. One of our problems at the federal level on education is that the law requires that we work through your state educational establishment, and if the Federal Government gets too tough, we get into serious problems in

public opinion. They say that we are trying to dominate the educational structure.

There are some ways that one can move around a bit on this with some of the OEO programs and some of the extra programs that come into the educational structure.

MISS ANGUIANO: I think that this is where we need assistance, to have the OEO programs really effective. But you see the money from OEO that is going into Los Angeles is going to the schools that are really not helping us, and we are very concerned about this, and I, as a taxpayer, you know, I think that I am especially concerned at the way the money is being spent, and therefore OEO should permit these well professionally equipped, intelligent Mexican American educators to come in and assist us in solving this problem.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Yes.

Mr. Piñon?

MR. PIÑON: Mr. Vice President, my name is Alberto Pinon. I am the National President of Community Service Organization. I have attended several conferences here in Washington, and one of the most difficult things for us to get across to the people in Washington, it seems to me anyway, that immediately the people here in Washington say, "Well, all these people want is jobs." Well, this is not necessarily true. What we are asking for is representation at a policy-making level of people who are knowledgeable in the culture and the bilingual abilities of the Spanish-surnamed or Mexican Americans particularly.

It isn't that we are harping for jobs, so please don't take this in that sense. What we do want, and we are insisting upon, is representation in our group so that we can in turn relate to these people, because in spite of the fact that we do have good representation in Washington and in state and federal government, we do not have those that are knowledgeable from our point of view of the problems that are inherent to this large segment of the community, and until such time as we do have representation of knowledgeable people who are bilingual and bicultural, you will never get a true picture of what the problem is.

It is not that we want jobs and preferably yours, no.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I understand that very well, my good friend.

(Discussion off the record).

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I will answer one more question. As a matter of fact, I have got to go to Cincinnati.

MR. TELLEZ: I have something here. In regard to submitting recommendations as to qualified applicants, I think our groups at this time are very discouraged and pessimistic that anything is being done in submitting qualified persons. Perhaps we are sending them to the wrong people. They get bogged down somewhere and they require different qualifications and maybe we don't know the type of qualifications that some of these agencies are requiring.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Well, it isn't that bad at all. I can tell you that this is a big country, of course, and whenever there is an opening, there is a great screening process that goes on. I sometimes think I don't know anybody that is competent, because I submit many names for jobs and they generally end up somewhere out on Utah Avenue or some place around here. They never get into federal employment. But the main thing to do is to keep at it, and I want to repeat, going back again and again. It is a matter of a little extra attention being paid to it.

One of the purposes of this conference obviously is to remind a man like myself and others that you are a bit unhappy. Not only a little bit, but plenty unhappy, about the lack of adequate representation in not only policy jobs, but I gather you mean also in regional administrative jobs; because when you are really right down to it I will let you in on the secret. This government isn't run out of Washington. It is run right where you live. You can have the best policy in the world coming out of a Cabinet office around here, and if you have a fellow out there at Santa Fe or Denver or Minneapolis that doesn't believe in it, he can stymie that thing for years. He can really -- at least -- dilute its effectiveness.

Now what we really need to be talking about are people in positions where the people live as well as out here in Washington, right down there where the decisions are implemented, and where the feedback comes in.

In other words, if we have good people on these regional and area and district jobs, where they get the feedback and they push it on up into the Washington levels, then some of the very things that you are talking about find a better reception.

MR. NORTH: I think we had better let the Vice President go on his way.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: These pretty ladies over here, I just can't refuse that.

MRS. FLORES: Mr. Vice President, your remarks were very well taken. I think it is the consensus of the group that we do want some of our people in top level policy making positions. I don't hold a doctor's degree. I don't hold a master's degree. I don't have a degree period.

But I practically feel like I have a Ph. D. working with people, which I have done for quite a number of years.

My question is this: Now in what areas can we place, let's say persons who do not have the particular education to fill, you know, capacities? Is there any other area where we can place some of our people who have worked, who do have the knowledge for some type of -- at least, let's say some type of commission, in an advisory capacity? Where can you disseminate these people, into what capacities?

My second question is this. As you can see, the women are not here in great numbers as the men.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: You are doing pretty well.

MRS. FLORES: I presume from one of the last meetings also there were only two participants. Now my question is this: How can we get more women of our Spanish-speaking background to be participants in conferences such as this, also to be selected for top positions as well as the men?

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: I have a very practical suggestion. You just give us the names of another 10, 20, or 30 women that are competent, that you think are competent. Of course, you put your reputation on the line when you say that you think they are competent.

The real problem is -- I don't know how Mr. North feels about this -- but I have to call conferences. I am in charge of the President's Youth Opportunity Program. I haven't done nearly as good a job as I want to do, and it affects many of your friends and neighbors. Every man is limited by his environment, by his background, by his acquaintanceship, and if I were asked today on the basis of saving my life to come up with a list of let's say 50 competent, trained, concerned -- not necessarily highly educated in a normal sense -- but concerned, competent, experienced women in the field of let's say human relations or employment opportunities or social welfare from the Mexican American Community, I would just have to say, "Well, shoot me."

MRS. FLORES: I will send them to you.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: That is what I am getting at. I want you to get them to us.

Let me just say this: If you get them to the Vice President, I will get them to where they belong. I am sort of a general practitioner in government. They don't really turn me loose in any specialized clinics, but I am a pro-people man. I believe in what you are talking about, and I want to say that if you don't have that degree that you are talking about,

don't feel badly. You seem to express yourself quite well. But don't go around doing it too often. Some people will quit college.

(Laughter).

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Thank you.

(Standing applause).

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Thank you very, very much.

Good-by.



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