

SPEECH
VICE PRESIDENT
FEB. 19, 1967

[Transcript]

SPEECH TO
DFL CENTRAL
COMMITTEE

George, I surely do want to thank you. After all the time that Muriel's been back here in Minnesota and knowing what Governor Wallace did down in Alabama, I began to think that she was the Lurlene of Minnesota here making all these speeches back here and you've made me feel how there's a place for me back in my home after that nice reception.

Muriel and I are on our way to California, to San Francisco, which is the home base of this illustrious congressman, Phil Burton, that's here with us today, and we're going to spend tomorrow there out at Stanford University, and at San Francisco, and the next day I go to Phoenix, Arizona, and then back to Washington.

I wanted to have this chance to stop by just to see old friends and neighbors and to, well, just to be home a little once again because we haven't been here since Christmas and I've missed many of you even though I've seen a goodly number of you come to Washington from time to time.

I noticed you have a rather busy calendar. The suggested long-range calendar of DFL activities. I picked one of those up there, George, as I sat down, and all I can say is that if you carry all of this out between now and November of 1967 things will look a lot better in November of 1968 and that's a good target date to point to.

I want to first of all say a word to my friend, the Mayor of Minneapolis. He says he's the best mayor that Minneapolis ever had--that is when he talks to me--and I'm prone to agree

with him. I think he's a remarkable public servant. I know that he has had the endorsement of our Hennepin County group, of the groups here in the Minneapolis area. I also know that he occupies what is termed a non-partisan office but I also know that Arthur Naftalin has been very proud to be an active member of the DFL and I've said a number of times that if anybody ever had any doubts about Mayor Naftalin they ought to reconcile those doubts by the knowledge or in the knowledge of the fact that he is married to Francis and with Fran and Art as the team, the first man and the first lady of Minneapolis, I think every DFLer in the city can be mighty proud of them, and I want to wish Art and Fran the best in this municipal election that's coming up.

I want to just say a word or two about another event. I notice that the YDFL state convention is on April 1 and April 2 and I had been invited to come. I wanted more than anything else to come to this meeting but I had promised some of my old friends back in the ADA back in Washington since this was their 20th anniversary that I would be there. I was one of the founders of that organization and time to time they take me to task. From time to time I take them to task. That's the privilege of friends. That's in fact, that's what friends are for. So I had made an early commitment and I'm afraid I won't be able to be here. I said I'm afraid I won't be able to be here. I don't want to be too definite because I'm just looking and looking and hoping and hoping that I can make it. And I'll tell you why. Because the future of this party depends upon the success of the YDFL. And I'm delighted to see as many young members here today. I noticed when I came in some of those that

greeted us wearing the badge of the YDFL. We need to build this organization. We need to build it on every college campus. We need to build it off the college campuses as well. We need to have fed into this party the trained leadership of the young Democrats, the YDFL. And I, if I can do nothing else today but to encourage that development, I'll feel that our visit here is worthwhile.

Phil Burton and Hubert Humphrey worked in the Young Democrats for many, many years. I used to attend national conventions of the Young Democrats with Phil Burton. I think Phil will tell you that when he ran for the state legislature in California, and was elected with overwhelming majorities--in fact his whole family gets elected. I told him the least he ought to leave one brother out. And he promised to do that. And he's kept his word. But we worked together building the young Democrats and I can tell you that that experience for Phil Burton was a valuable one and for me it was a valuable one. So and in this party, Phil, may I say that while we have the YDFL we've never made any distinction. Any one that is active in our party circles can occupy any office of the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party whether they're young or old or middle aged or whatever their age or their feelings may be. But we need this well-spring of new enthusiastic support and I ask you to go on out and mobilize it and get it. And why should you? Because when all is said and done and after you've had all of your opportunity to criticize and to analyze and to scrutinize what the party program is and what the administration does, remember that you have to make a comparison between this administration and this party and a

potential Republican administration and the Republican Party. And when you make that analysis and that comparison, not between perfection and total imperfection, but between real alternatives, I don't think there's any doubt but what you'll be back in the fold battling hard to make sure that the Democratic administration maintains itself in power in Washington and that you build for the day that we can once again have a Democratic administration here in the state of Minnesota. Here in the state house and in the legislature. So let's get busy and get that job underway as you're planning in the long-term program of yours.

Now the biggest event that I see on the calendar for the immediate future is this DFL Congressional Dinner. And I have said to Warren Spannaus and I have said to George Farr that we are going to do everything that we can as friend and as fellow citizen and as a member of the DFL Party and one that has enjoyed your confidence, your support, and your friendship and your help. I have asked every member of my official family to cooperate. I want to say to Warren Spannaus and to George Farr and to the others that may be working on this dinner, that you'll have unstinted, whole-hearted cooperation. We ought to make this a matter of a bench mark so to speak in the progress of this party. That dinner ought to be the greatest outpouring of DFL support that this party has known since it's inception. There's only one way, may I say, to overcome past difficulties and that's with a brand new start. And you've got the chance on the date of March 4th. It used to be that we changed administrations on March 4 until an amendment to the Constitution. Well, we're not changing any administrations but I want to tell

you that we can change stride. We can lengthen that step of the DFL. We can extend ourselves now. We can give ourselves the resources and the purpose and the enthusiasm on that dinner on March 4 to go ahead and let there be a signal go out in this state that the DFL is united, that the DFL is activated, that the DFL is at work, that the DFL is building and that we're building for 1968 and we're building for 1970 and we intend to win. Let's just get the message out.

Now I want to just take a few moments of your time on something that we, that we ought to give some thought to. There's a tendency amongst all of us who have high standards in politics. Who are idealistic in politics and we must always be idealistic. We must always state those ideals. That there is a tendency to indicate by our criticism of the inability or of our lack of attainment, of those of our inability to attain those ideals or to perform well enough to fulfill those ideals. There's a tendency to have that criticism seem as if it's opposition. We need to make it crystal clear to ourselves and to others that even as Americans, when we criticize a governmental policy internationally, we're not anti-USA. We're free men and free people. That even when we have a different point of view on an issue as grave as peace and war, we're not anti-American or disloyal. That this is the right of a free people in a free country. We need to have that clearly understood amongst ourselves and we hope that it's understood in the world.

And we need to have it understood, too, that when we criticize, for example, a policy that doesn't seem to go quite far enough in rebuilding our cities or in winning the war on

poverty or meeting the needs of our deprived and our needy people, that that criticism doesn't mean that we are opposing what we're doing. It doesn't mean that we're against it. It simply means that we're restless. That we want to do more. That we want to do better. And I think the secret of our nation has been that it is an impatient nation. That it is a restless nation. And yet that impatience and that restlessness has during the history of this country been at least disciplined so that it did not get us completely out of hand and lose our sense of direction. So now we come to a period where I think that our restlessness, our desire to do more, must be put in proper perspective. Let me give you what I mean.

Today as I speak to you, or tomorrow, let's put it on that day because it will be a work day, there will be one million, one million, young men and women in training for new jobs. One million young men and women, most of whom come from the poverty stricken families of this nation, from the rural areas where poverty is all too evident, from the ghettos of our cities where poverty is to be found in block after block. One million of them.

Six years ago tomorrow not one single person was in training. Not one. That's one million improvement. I wish there were three million in training. But there's one million. And may I say those one million that are in training are there today because an administration, this party, gave leadership to those training programs. That's what we ought to be emphasizing.

There are one million more young men and women in college today because of federal grants and scholarships and loans then

there were three years ago. Five years ago the total aid to all of our cities, the total aid to all of our cities, everything, I mean to all of our poor, everything was under nine billion dollars. That included social security benefit payments, welfare payments, unemployment compensation, everything that the federal government had in its budget that related to persons that fell within what we call the economic category of the poor. The fiscal year that we're about to enter will see \$25 billion dedicated to the war on poverty. Three years ago there wasn't any war on poverty.

I remember three years ago when Sargent Shriver came to my office when I was then majority whip of the Senate and talked to me about the legislation, the message first. The message in March, 1964, about the war on poverty. And I remember when the legislation was passed.

We've only had a little over two years in this struggle and in those two years the following things have happened: 50 of the major metropolitan areas of the United States today have organized efforts, committees, structured to combat poverty in the midst of those metropolitan areas. Over five million people that are known as victims of poverty have had direct benefits from the poverty program. Over one million of the adults in the poverty group have been placed in jobs that are well paying so that they're self-reliant, self-respecting citizens. Thirty five thousand young people from the slums of our cities, from schools that were inadequate and second-rate, were tested and brought out of those schools and sent on to a university in what we call Project Upward Bound. A million, 300 thousand little children between the ages of three and five

have had the blessings and the benefits of Project Headstart. Fifty six thousand people, poor people, many of them, are today involved in community action committees. For the first time the poor, the people that never had a chance to make a single decision on their own about their own future, are making decisions.

Thirteen thousand young men have graduated from the job corps. No, 16 thousand have graduated from the job corps. Thirteen thousand of those 16,000 are in gainful employment today. The other 3,000 went into the military services--educated, healthy, trained, And 31,000 more tomorrow morning will be in those job corps projects. For those that came in that ever had had a job, and less than 5% of them had ever had a job, the average income, the average wage, was 70¢ an hour. The average wage of the 13,000 that will be at work tomorrow morning is \$1.71 an hour. People who were relief clients, depressed, despairing, filled with bitterness and hatred, school drop-outs, ignorant, illiterate, are today self-respecting, self-sustaining citizens.

This is what you ought to be talking about. This is what this party stands for. And in the meantime, you've had 71 months of unprecedented economic prosperity. There have been 9 million new jobs since 1961. And 7 million of them since 1963. That's not a bad record. Unemployment is at its lowest rate in 14 years. The gross national product is approaching three-quarters of a trillion dollars. And the rate of economic growth in between four and five percent. And the rate of inflation in this country is the lowest of any industrialized nation on the face

of the earth. I think it's pretty good. I think it's a pretty good record.

Three million 200 thousand people have been given medicare. Had the privileges and had the opportunities of medicare since July, 1966. Just a few months ago. And of that 3 million 200 thousand of them, two million 500 thousand of them have had hospital care and the others have had outpatient medical care of the best that this country can offer.

The hospitals have been paid \$1 billion in cash. Hospitals that before were wondering how they were going to meet their bills. The doctors have been paid \$100 million in fees. The private relationship between patient and doctor has remained inviolate. And the hospitals today and their equipment, their facilities, and in their practice, are better than ever before. I spoke last night to 2,000 of the heart doctors of this country, the cardiologists. And I traced for them what we're doing. \$3 billion of federal funds in health investment this year. A billion dollars of it in research in the national institutes of health. The establishment of regional centers for heart disease, stroke and cancer in 50% of the counties of the United States. We're doing things. Oh, somebody's going to say, what about the other 50%. Well, we just got started. You don't accomplish these things overnight. The important thing is this is the party of beginnings. We're the party that dares to try.

And sometimes I must say that it would seem only fitting and right that those who are members of this party speak up for what has been done. And not only speak up for what has been done but

Speak up about what we want to do, because we're thinking about 10 years from now. We want to think about the day, for example, of what's going to happen to the fantastic economic resources of this country when they can all be applied to peace-time activity.

What are our economic plans post-Viet Nam? That war will come to an end. And wherein and what then will we do? Will it be like after Korea? What did we do after Korea? I hear many people say, isn't it too bad we have to spend all this money in Viet Nam? Yes, it is. No one is more pained about it than the man that's talking to you. Unless it's the President of the United States. But I want to task you, what what did we do after the war stopped in Korea? Did we meet the poverty of our cities? Did we rebuild Minneapolis? Did we have fantastic big urban slum clearances? Did we have federal aid to education? Did we have medicare? Did we try to get at the hard core unemployed? Did we build our great public structures in America? The answer is no. We didn't do any of it. We just took it easy.

And, in fact, we went into a recession. And we had three economic recessions from 1954 to 1960. Three of them. The price of which cost much more than any war in terms of economics. And in fact, many a person, for all practical purposes, lost the desire to live, in hopelessness and bitterness and frustration.

What did we do about race relations during those days? Little or nothing. We had to wait until 1964 for the civil rights act. Under this party. Under this president. Under this administration. And the voting rights act of 1965? Under this party. Under this president. And under this administration.

The model cities act? Under this party. Under this president. And under this administration. Federal aid to education that was killed every time on race or religion for 20 years. But it was passed under this president. Under this party. Under this administration. Federal aid to higher education? Federal aid in mental health and mental retardation. Today almost 18% of the budget of every state budget comes from federal revenues. Grants-in-aid have gone up by leaps and bounds. Under this party. Under this administration.

I'm not here to apologize for our administration. I don't say we've done it all well. I don't say we couldn't have done more. I only say we've done better than any opposition ever even planned on doing. And it deserves your support.

And we haven't forgot a single segment of this country. Agriculture. Business. Labor. There have been better labor-management relations. There have been better agricultural policies then we've known in all of our history. The income of the average worker, including price increases, taking into consideration what we call the rise in the cost of living, has increased in the last three years by 25%. That's an economic fact. The profits of American business have never been better. The dividends of the American stockholder have never been better. And the economy is strong.

Now this is not all accidental. People work at it. Men like this man that's here from Congress. Your two senators. Your DFL congressmen. Your president.

Of course we have our troubles. And they're always headlined. But I want to tell you that many a life has been saved and many a community has been helped. Many of them.

The Appalacia program worked. The economical development administration program has worked. The poverty program has made success and I'm not here to apologize for it. When I think of the lives that have been touched, I have some reason to be reasonably happy.

There's going to be a gentleman in this community I think next week, Mr. Mayor, Leon Sullivan, the Reverend Leon Sullivan. This coming Friday? Oh, he was here. Well, he's a remarkable man. I'm sure that many of you, some of you may have heard his message. I work with him. He represents what we call job training. Motivation. The OIC--Opportunities Industrialization Cooperation. He represents job training. In the city of Philadelphia alone where he started a a Negro preacher with little or nothing and then got some help from the Ford Foundation, and then got some help from the Office of Economic Opportunity, 2,000 young men, hard core unemployed--unemployables--were trained. Jobs. And \$8 million was added in one year to the payroll of those young men and women in Philadelphia.

There are 65 of those programs going on right now. I had Senator Fred Harris of Oklahoma tell me the other morning of an incident down in New Orleans where another one of these programs is underway. Where the Office of Economic Opportunity and our Department of Labor are cooperating with Father Tomick of Loyola University in an unprecedented, unorthodox project of motivation, spiritual rebirth, intellectual rehabilitation, physical rehabilitation, and the record is something that would make you sing.

One incident, one case of one lady who was nothing but

trouble with everything from addiction to illegitimacy. She was brought in and trained. First of all she had to be recruited by what we call community representatives, the poor who work with the poor. She was given guidance, counselling, training, patiently. She was 28 years of age. She'd never had a job in her life. She's been on relief all of her known days either as a child or as an adult. She got a job working for a medical firm that produces medical supplies as a secretary. When she got her first check she said to this priest who happened to be one that sort of rescued her along the way that was in this school, she said, this is the first time, Father, that I've ever seen my name printed on a check that I've earned. Never seen it before. She said, it's so important to me I want to keep it. But I desperately need the money so I'm afraid I'll have to cash it. Then came the second check. And she said, Father, this is the first time I've ever paid taxes. She said, look on here, there's a stub that tells me I pay so much in social security and withholding and so forth. She said, I never knew what it was before to pay taxes. I'm so proud to be a citizen once, now at long last to be a citizen. And then the fourth month, to show you how totally rehabilitated this lady became, she came and she said, Father, just look at all the taxes this government's charging me. That's rehabilitation. And it's happening. It's happening.

Now I want to conclude on this. I'd like to ask the members of this state central committee to get the President's messages, his civil rights message, his economic message, his

crime message. I want you to get these messages, his foreign aid message, they're state documents. I want you to get them and study them. This is the platform on which we run. We're going to have opposition. I want you to get his messages on the cities. His message on the war on poverty. And I want you to remember what he said in his state of the union. This is a time for testing. We're going to separate the men from the boys as they say. We're going to separate in this country those who have will and determination and perserverance from those who are the summer soldiers that just fade away when it gets a little tough.

And we're going to have standup votes in Congress. And when those standup votes and when those record votes are taken, you're going to find out who's with you and who's against you. And we're going to go to the country with that record.

And what do I hear from some of the people in Congress today? I hear we ought to cut this and we ought to cut that. That we ought to cut this and we ought to cut that. And what do I hear from those who aspire to the presidency as they travel around this country? Generalities and criticism. Saying that there's confusion. Saying that there's duplication. There are governors and others that are traveling from one end of this country to another to carry this message without a constructive proposal. Just attack, attack, attack.

And my fellow Americans, and my fellow DFLers, let me tell you something. We're going to keep the record. And we're going to go out to the country and we're going to say let's look at the record. And we're going to see, Mr. Mayor, who in this

Congress really wants to help the cities. We're going to find out in this Congress which political party it is that really wants to see true equality of opportunity in this country. And our farmers are going to find out just who it is that's on your side. As you appeal for the opportunity to build a better life in rural America. And we're going to find out in this Congress just where people stand on some of the great issues of health and education.

We'll have the issue and you get ready to do battle because I'm going to let you in on a secret right now. We don't intend to back up one inch. Not one inch. I'd rather be-- I had the chance to say this the other night when visiting with a group of our fellow Democrats in Washington who were a bit critical. Were worried about image. Worried about popularity. I said, listen, what we ought to be concerned about is substance and principle. That image stuff and popularity will take care of itself. Let's stick with the substance and principle because you're not clever enough to figure out how you can be popular tomorrow. By trickery and gimmickery.

I feel as your vice-president that my duty is not to look pretty. It's not my duty and not my responsibility to figure out just how to be popular. I think it is my duty and my responsibility to try to pray to God how to be right and how to stand for something and how to have the courage to take a stand even if people at the moment don't like it. And I'm going to be that way.

And I want this party to have that courage. I want you to

examine what your state needs. I want you not to be opposition for the sake of opposition. We don't know how to do that. That's a special prerogative of an old trained party. Let them have that. I want us to be constructively critical, but always constructive. If the opposition, if the party in power in this state, has a program that you can't support, then offer a better one or don't criticize. Because it's difficult enough for anyone to govern. And those who are critics of those who are in power should offer good constructive alternatives.

So let us look at our state. Let us look at our nation. Let us look at our world. And let's see if we can't offer some constructive analysis, and if there's criticism to be made, let it be constructive. If there's support that may be made, let it be responsible support.

And I want this DFL Party of this state to continue to be issue-oriented. I want you to study the great issues. I want you to read the President's message that came down here the other day on nuclear proliferation, on the anti-ballistic missile, on the desperate need in this world for better relationships with Eastern Europe, for breaking down the barriers of the Iron Curtain, for dissolving the Cold War, for entering into a whole new phase of international relationships of cooperation and of understanding. I want you to do that.

I want you to think out loud. I want you to be what we've always been. An issue-oriented party. And if we are, we'll have workers. If we do that, we'll have support in the suburbs. If we do this, we'll have support in rural America.

all
But if we're going to do is bicker about who's going to run

things, if all we're going to worry about is some individual or individuals, we're not going to have anything. The DFL Party was built on the basis of substance and principle. Image and popularity were by-products.

And, so stay with the primary objective. Have the courage to think, to have ideas, to be creative, have the willingness to go on out and talk and if need be, to take a stand for what you believe in, and then have the good sense to be loyal. To be loyal to the party.

I'm very proud of you, and I want to leave you right now. I've been too long with you. Bill Connell told me, now don't get serious when you get in there. And I guess that's maybe what I should have, I should have followed his advise, but we don't get together very often.

I just think that we ought to kind of keep looking at where we are and where we want to go, and at all times let's do what we know will at least gain respect. Because the American people are getting a little concerned about their politics. They're beginning to wonder if we really mean what we say.

And I want the DFL Party to be, whether it's in power or out of power, whether it wins or whether it loses. I want it to have the qualities of a Harry Truman, who had courage in abundance. And of an Adlai Stevenson, who had a graciousness and a nobility and a sense of integrity that commended him for generations yet unborn. And I want it to be the kind of a party that had the sense of commitment and idealism of a John Kennedy. And I want it to be the kind of a party that has the

ability and the competence and the resoluteness of a Lyndon B. Johnson. And if you have those qualities of courage and of nobility, of creativity, and of resolute purpose and perserverance, you'll survive. You'll win and what's more important, you can be proud of yourself. You can stand up a little taller.

And as for myself, well, I've done quite well so far with your help. I know not what the future may offer, but I know this, that whatever days I have will be used for this country and for what I believe is best for this country. And will be used to help our president, and what I believe is best for our president to do for this country. And will be used to strengthen representative government and the progressive cause in this nation.

My liberalism is as liberal and progressive today as it was years ago. Only may I say, it's even richer and more mature. And I'm going to keep it that way. And I'm going to ask you to march with me for the days ahead, not the days of yesterday. You can't live those days. They're all over. I want you to think about where we're going to go next year, the following year. And as I said to a group of senators the other night, you're not worth your salt unless you're thinking 10 years in advance.

Pioneer, Innovate. Create. Be willing to experiment and then you can call yourself a Democrat. If you're not willing to do so, change your label, Join the other party. They know all about ancient history. Thank you very much.



Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



www.mnhs.org