

EDITED TRANSCRIPT  
VICE-PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY  
FARMERS UNION LADIES FLY-IN  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
MAY 7, 1968

I know you have been up on Capitol Hill to see the members of Congress and I'm pleased that you have done this. I've been meeting with the Farmers Union groups for many years as they have come to Washington.

As Ed Christianson can tell you, I used to go out around the state of Minnesota --- and occasionally over into Wisconsin and down to Iowa and to North and South Dakota --- to help with a little organizing for the Farmers Union. I wasn't on official organizing business, but what we stood for and what we worked for was so similar that it was very easy for me to encourage farm families to affiliate with this wonderful organization.

When you are here in Washington, you bring with you an expression of what people need, and what people are thinking back home. Every one of us, after being here in the nation's capitol for any period of time, needs to go back and refresh our minds with the people we represent.

But just as it is important for a member of Congress or a President or a Vice-President or a Cabinet officer to go to see the people, it is very, very important for the people to come to see the members of Congress and the officials of government. This two-way exchange is very important.

I think that you are proving, with your visit here, that what is also needed is that the people come down here to see the members of Congress and other officials in their offices ... where they're doing business ... where their laws are being made ... and where the policies are being designed.

And, in so doing, you help influence those laws. You help influence those policies. And you help influence them for good.

I told Ed Christianson as we were walking in, "I think I'm going to ask the ladies to go back up on Capitol Hill and give them an extra talking to up there, because we need some help." When I say "We," I mean all of us.

To give you an example, we have an appropriation up there in Congress now that asks for \$25 million more for the Head Start program. Project Head Start means so much to some of these areas. Here we are, an \$850 billion nation arguing over a \$25 million appropriation for little children. Now we need that; we need it desperately. We need to find resources to keep our schools open this summer for our youngsters.

I don't mean just the old traditional school program. I mean to keep those playgrounds open and to have proper supervision, to have a chance for some of our young people who may have fallen behind a little bit to catch up.

Those great facilities are there. You paid for them, my friends. The taxpayers of America have invested almost \$60 billion in our elementary and secondary facilities. Now those resources ought to be used.

Young people don't have the same things to do that they had when I was a boy. It is a different kind of world and you ladies know it better than anybody else because you are the mothers.

You know the temptations of our young people. You know the pressures. You know that the automobile itself has changed family living. We must, somehow, provide the kind of programs and the kind of incentives that make it possible for our young people to use their energies constructively.

Quite candidly I am talking to a group of ladies that live in the part of America where some of these problems that we face in our great metropolitan areas are not quite as vivid, as strident, or even as dangerous.

I want to encourage all of America to take a good look at our country. I've said to many people --- and I am going to make this a big talking point in what I have to say to the people this year --- that we need to make sure that the American people have an opportunity in every section of America. It ought not to be necessary for a young man or a young woman to feel they have to leave their hometown to get a job, or to get a better education, or to get a better opportunity.

One of the real answers to the so-called urban crisis is to do something about rural America.

We do not want to tell people that you must live here or that you must live there. We can't afford, and we don't want, the kind of government that directs people where they ought to live. But we ought to have a society that permits people to have a real free choice.

Now there isn't any real free choice for a young man or woman, age 18 or 20 or 21, when they become a little restless and want to take off. There isn't any real choice when a young man can earn more working in a filling station in the big city than he can working on his farm with a \$50,000 or \$100,000 investment.

This, then, is why we must keep saying to our urban friends that farm income and farm price policy are a basic part of the over-all well-being of the American nation.

We must make it possible for a dairy farmer --- one of the most expensive types of operations and one of the most difficult --- can earn a fair reward for his labor and his investment. And you and I know that, despite our efforts, that isn't the case now. We've increased dairy price supports, we've cut down on dairy imports, but we still have to do more.

I can summarize it for you this way. I want to see America's rural communities and its rural countryside to have the same social, educational, and economic advantages as any big city or any big metropolitan area.

This means better schools and better teachers. It means good hospitals and well-trained doctors. It means a community center. It may mean a cultural program. It means small factories, or even big ones, in the area so there can be additional employment opportunities.

I want to have it so our young people can live in these areas and live a good and full life. We don't want a society where both sea coasts are weighted down with skyscrapers and people and the center of America stands almost vacant. We don't want that. Nor do we want a society in which people are driven by economic necessity to leave the land they love to go to concrete and steel and brick in the cities, hopefully to seek a better life.

Part of the problem today in the big cities, in the slums, is due to the fact that many people come there from backgrounds that are inadequate, deprived, with poor education, poor health, little or no income, and no training.

We have literally millions of people, some white and some black, that have come out of rural America, poverty-stricken areas of rural America. And, by the way, there is more poverty in rural America than there is in urban America. This is something that most people don't know. But it's a fact.

Many of these people have come into our big cities and they're like foreigners in a strange land. They're unaccustomed to city living, to urban standards, to industrialized production. They have been poorly trained, if trained at all. That is what has accumulated in New York and Philadelphia and Detroit and so on down the line. That's the accumulation of human neglect.

Now the answer is what we try to do to control floods. You don't control them by building higher dikes. You control them, as we know, by upstream development. And, in the process of controlling them, you develop some wonderful living conditions.

I think of my friends here from North and South Dakota and Montana, for example, where we developed the Missouri River where there is a whole new area of activity. Lakes have come into being, and irrigation. And you know that in all the floods of the last three or four years, there have been no major ones on the Missouri. Why? Because of upstream control.

If you make rural America a better place to live where there's modern sanitation, housing, schools, hospitals ... if you make rural America a place where people can enjoy good living and earn a good living, you're not going to have everybody rushing on in to the big metropolitan areas in the hope that somehow or other it will be better.

We want to make all parts of America better. And I'll tell you something about that for the record. You can develop rural America at one-tenth the cost of rehabilitating the slums.

I'm going to come back to the American people on national television and in my speeches across the country and outline this in detail. This is something your Vice-President knows something about.

For three and one-half years now, I've been the liaison officer between the President and the nation's mayors. I've been very active, as John Baker or Orville Freeman can tell you, with our rural people throughout the country. I come from that kind of background and I'm proud of it.

I hope to be able to present this year to the American people a program of what I would call urban-rural balance, the town and country program of how we develop America between the great ranges of the mountains.

By the way, there is going to be another hundred million people in this country in the next 30 years. Now, where are they going to live? Are they all going to be shoved into already overcrowded, traffic-congested cities? Or are we going to build new cities and new towns? Are we going to make rural America a place that is both economically desirable and socially desirable? I think that is the great question before the American people. I think we've got some answers for them.

Now on the farm policy issues, the legislative program, I'm sure you know where I stand on this. I appreciated Ed Christianson telling you that I was the floor leader for the farm bills when I was assistant majority leader in the Senate. I fought hard for those bills. Sometimes we had to pass them three or four times before we were through. Now our farm legislation may not be the best in the world, but it's the best we've had so far.

Now the truth is our farm program is a beginning. We don't say it's perfect. I'll only tell you this. It's better than the boys who fought against it ever had in mind --- by far.

I know that there are a number of people up in Congress today that want to repeal all farm legislation. There were 20 some bills introduced last year in the House of Representatives to repeal the farm legislation that we have. It I may be a little partisan, I want to point out that most of these bills were not introduced by a responsible Democrat.

Now I'm not going to try to tell you what party you ought to belong to. You be for the person who is for you. That simplifies it. I know that when I talk to you that I'm talking to people interested in more than just the price --- although that is very basic. You're interested in a good life, good roads, good schools, good medical care and good cultural activities.

So you take a look at the voting records. Farm policy is not made on farms. It's made right here in Washington. You have some attention now in this city. This is an important year for you.

When I talked to a group of labor friends: the other day, I said the contract is up for re-negotiation. And when our labor friends get together, they know how to bargain. I've been advocating a little bargaining power for American agriculture, too.

I'm no "Johnny-Come-Lately" to this business. I started listening to agricultural lectures and farm speeches back in the days of the McNary-Haugen bill. I remember the Agricultural Adjustment Act of the 1930's and all the other battles we've

gone through. One big difference is that there are fewer people in Congress today with a rural background. That's why you must be able to take your message to Congress as a program for all of America. To the eternal credit of Farmers Union, you are not a special interest group.

You think of your country's security, its health, its education, its housing, its old people and young, its disabled and diseased. You have a program for America.

You don't just come down here as a special pleader and say, "All I want is a better price for wheat --- as important as that is --- or for hogs or soybeans or cattle or milk or eggs." You come down here and say, "I'd like to have the chance, if I work a little harder than most people work, to get at least a fair price for what I produce."

I can say as a personal testament as a son of a father and mother who lived in rural America, that I am as devoted to a fair deal, a fair break, a new opportunity for American agriculture as I am devoted to my family. It's been a part of my life, this whole business that we're talking about.

So go up there to Congress now and say that we want that Farm Act extended. And if you can suggest some improvements, do that, too.

Tell them we want that grain reserve program, too. We need that one. We don't want a reserve program that makes it possible to dump grain on the market. We want one that can be saved for emergencies, to protect this nation in its times of need.

Do you know how you are going to get it? You may have to elect a new Congress. You lost in 1966 when 47 members of Congress went down the drain in that election ... and five of them were on the subcommittee that handles the reserve legislation. The new five that came in voted against it. The five that went out were voting for you.

We might just as well talk plain to each other. The facts are that if you want something for your part of America, for your family and your home, for what you believe in, you're going to have to scrap for it. You put up as good an argument with the politicians as you do with your husband and you'll win.





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