

FOR THE HONORABLE HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

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VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY INTERVIEWED

EDWIN NEWMAN: Earlier in this hour we saw Vice President Humphrey speaking last night. While a candidate's work is never done, the Vice President is in our Washington studio this morning with NBC News correspondent, Richard Valeriani.

Dick.

VALERIANI: Thank you, Ed. And good morning.

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Good morning.

VALERIANI: Mister Vice President, when you started campaigning, you were practicing what you called the politics of joy and the politics of happiness. You don't say that anymore, do you feel that maybe you misjudged the public temperament?

HUMPHREY: No, I was speaking for myself, Dick. What I was trying to indicate was, that when you enter into something like a political campaign, you ought to do it with enthusiasm, it ought to be -- it ought to be an enriching and rewarding part of your life.

I like public life and I like political activity. To me, it is a part of the happiness of my life.

I wasn't speaking for others, but I've noticed that when we get our group together, we get our fellow Democrats together, there's great enthusiasm. It isn't like a wake, it's -- it's a conclave or a gathering of people that have the desire to get out and do something. As a matter of fact, if we don't have enthusiasm somebody comments on it.

So, I don't retract the phrase at all. As a matter of fact, it comes from pretty good American ancestry: Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Now, if Thomas Jefferson and the authors of the Declaration of Independence could find some happiness at the time of Valley Forge, I think I can find a little happiness in 1968.

VALERIANI: In terms of enthusiasm, Mr. Vice President, it doesn't seem that your campaign has struck any sparks yet. Are you worried about this?

HUMPHREY: Not at all. As a matter of fact, I think it's done very, very well.

We've had some wonderful gatherings, some very enthusiastic meetings. I thought the one we had last night was not exactly a -- a mourning society. It seemed to me like it was rather enthusiastic.

Our visit to San Francisco was good.

Every meeting can't be enthusiastic. Some of them are just plain hard work. For example, when you sit down with the city council, as I did in Cleveland, working on municipal problems; spending two hours with the mayor and the leaders of the city. That's hard work and that's good work. It's important work.

Frequently we meet with different leadership groups throughout our country, in an effort to have a continuing dialogue and constructive contact. I think that's -- while it may not be enthusiastic, it's productive.

What's most important in politics is the productivity of it, that is, what you're trying to do and what it yields, the constructive nature of it.

And as the campaign comes along and when the Republicans select their nominee, I think we'll have plenty of enthusiasm and plenty of reason to want to go to work.

NEWMAN: Mister Vice President, this is Ed Newman in New York.

You issued a statement yesterday, Mr. Vice President, in which you said there should be free elections in South Vietnam in which every group should take part. Does that include the National Liberation Front which is the political arm of the Viet Cong?

HUMPHREY: Yes, that included every person that is willing to abide by a peaceful, free election and to engage in the peaceful processes of democracy.

I have long felt this way, Mr. Newman, in fact, I've been advocating such a procedure now for a year and a half.

NEWMAN: Mister Vice President, in 1966 you said that -- and you said yesterday that everybody must be prepared to accept the results of that election -- but in 1966, you said that having the Viet Cong or the NLF in a coalition government in Viet Cong (sic) was -- be like -- would be like putting a fox in the chicken coop and there wouldn't be any chickens left....

HUMPHREY: Well, now....

NEWMAN: What made you change your mind, sir?

HUMPHREY: I haven't changed my mind at all. I've always believed in free elections, but I have not believed in imposing a Communist group in a government, because history shows that when you impose one, such as were done -- as was done after World War II, that generally the government ceases to be a free government and becomes a Communist government....

NEWMAN: Suppose the NF....

HUMPHREY: But -- may I just say that....

NEWMAN: Sorry.

HUMPHREY: Many -- many countries today have the right to elect their deputies and their governments from all different political parties.

I mean, Communists are elected to parliament in France. They're elected to parliament in the Scandinavian countries. They're elected to parliament in Italy. These are free elections where people are able to participate, but they do not control the government.

What I am simply saying is, the rule of one man and one vote is a good rule for a democracy, and....

NEWMAN: In April....

HUMPHREY: Yes, sir.

NEWMAN: Sir, in April, '66 you described the National Liberation Front as a front for Hanoi.

HUMPHREY: That's correct.

NEWMAN: Why then would you, if you believe that, allow them to take part in an election....

HUMPHREY: I....

NEWMAN: ...in South Vietnam?

HUMPHREY: I would permit individuals, regardless of their political persuasion, to take part in an election in Vietnam just as we do here. Communists can run for office in the United States, I see no reason why they shouldn't be able to run for office in Vietnam.

I don't think they'll be elected. I doubt that they'd ever take over. There's never been a Communist government freely elected.

What I'm concerned about is that, some people want to impose on a free people a Communist government. I'm not worried that a free people is going to impose on themselves a Communist government.

VALERIANI: Mister Vice President, this runs directly counter to the views of the South Vietnamese Government. They've just imprisoned the presidential candidate who ran second in last year's election for advocating peace talks with the Viet Cong.

HUMPHREY: Well, I think they're wrong in doing what they've done. And I'm not speaking for the South Vietnamese Government, I'm speaking for myself. I have always believed in the free processes of a free election and a free choice.

And if the people of South Vietnam wish to elect a government that includes within it forces and individuals that I do not approve of, that's their right. As a matter of fact, once in a while, there are elections in the United States where people are elected that I don't approve of.

VALERIANI: Well, wouldn't we have to impose on them to get them to reform?

HUMPHREY: Free elections is not an imposition, if you believe in the democratic process. And I think we're trying to split hairs here. What we're really trying to say, and what I'm trying to say, is that, in a country that -- where we wish -- where we wish to see representative government, that the right of an individual to run for office and to vote is a very precious right.

I'm saying that a democratic society should permit people of all groups to be active participants in the political process. I'm also saying that, that is not imposing a rule on anybody, what it is, is permitting one man, one vote, let the majority rule and let the minority participate.

VALERIANI: Well, from the U. S. bargaining point, Mr. Vice President, how much are we restricted by the refusal of South Vietnam to go along with any kind of democratic reform?

HUMPHREY: Well, I think the government of South Vietnam has done a great deal in terms of democratic reform. After all, first of all, they had to have some elections. It's the government of North Vietnam that has had no democratic reforms.

There has been a change in the government in recent months with a new Prime Minister, one who has been looked upon as a very courageous and patriotic and a dedicated man; a man of democratic inclinations and democratic -- the democratic stand. I believe that government is making progress.

What I'm saying is that, at a negotiating table, if you're really looking for a political settlement, you have to make some concessions.

And while the present government of South Vietnam has a ban upon even neutralists, as well as the NLF, I'm saying that this is one of the adjustments that could be well made within the confines of our traditions and within the confines of what I consider as -- is responsibility; namely that all people participate in the political process in a free election, supervised so that there's no coercion or intimidation.

How anybody can be against that in this country is beyond me. Now, there may be some in other countries that are against it, but in the United States we believe in free political participation, and so do they -- so do people in most all free countries.

So, I think it's a good stand to take, and I'm perfectly willing to rest my case on the right of the people to select whomever they wish to run their country.

VALERIANI: When do you expect to make public your position paper on Southeast Asia and Vietnam?

HUMPHREY: Well, from time to time, I've been speaking out on different aspects of my views on Vietnam, such as ceasefire, the right of free elections, economic development, the necessity of the United States more fully equipping and training the army of South Vietnam, so that it can conduct its own self defense.

I thought that we would take these items pretty much one by one, discuss them as we are, and then, at an appropriate time, summarize them into a position paper.

You may have noticed the other day that I extended my enthusiastic support to the proposal of the National Committee for a Political Settlement in Vietnam. This committee is chaired by Clark Kerr.

I had one caveat or one elaboration, namely on the ceasefire, where I would ask that there be some act of reciprocity from the North. I think the American people have a right to expect that the North will respond some -- in some constructive way to what we've already done, namely to limit the bombing to south of the 19th Parallel.

VALERIANI: Sorry to interrupt, Mr. Vice President, but our time is up. Thank you very much.



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