

STENOGRAPHIC TRANSCRIPT

In re: Speech by

HON. HUBERT H. HUMPHREY,
Vice President of the
United States of America

At Allentown, Pennsylvania

Civic Leaders Reception

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HON. HUBERT H. HUMPHREY)
Vice President of the United States)

Allentown, Pennsylvania)
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The HON. HUBERT H. HUMPHREY, Vice President of the United States of America, arrived in the Patio Room of Hess's Department Store, Allentown, Pennsylvania, on Friday, 16 August 1968, and before a gathering of guests hosted by Philip I. Berman, gave the following speech:-

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MR. BERMAN: I would like to welcome you, Mr. Vice President, and I would like to welcome all our friends here who are joined here this morning. You know, we have a slogan here at Hess's: "You can find the best of everything at Hess's." And this applies to guests as well.

(APPLAUSE)

The important people of our community, all 108,000 of them, would have liked to have joined you this morning. A proof of this is the fact that I invited personally one hundred people. I called them up and I got one hundred yeses. So, Mr. Vice President Humphrey, you are so very much welcome

1 here with us.

2 I remember about four years ago having a businessman's
3 breakfast with you in New York, and if I remember correctly the
4 night before you had steak with David Rockefeller and the
5 bankers. So this morning we decided to have steak and eggs,
6 because here you have not only the businessmen and the bankers
7 but the educators, the community leaders, labor leaders, and
8 just interested citizens. They are all here to welcome you.

9 Following that breakfast I wrote President Johnson
10 a letter and suggested you would be his best candidate for the
11 vice presidency. I got a very nice reply from him -- and a
12 very warm reply from you. Now that my batting average is one
13 hundred percent, I wrote you a letter last week suggesting an-
14 other name. I got a reply and with a little script after the
15 nice letter interpreted it as saying "when," and before the
16 breakfast is over I intend to give you the reply.

17 Everyone here is waiting to hear from you, but I
18 would like to make a personal observation first. Years ago you
19 worked in a store, and with this experience and background you
20 went on to be Mayor of Minneapolis, a United States Senator,
21 and the Vice President of the United States. Well, my problem
22 was that a number of years ago I appeared to be drifting, so
23 I decided maybe I needed a store and that might help.

24 And, now, the Vice President of the United States,
25 Hubert H. Humphrey.

(APPLAUSE)

1 VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Thank you very much, Mr.
2 Berman -- my good friend Phil -- and Mrs. Berman -- and the
3 name that you have is very dear to me -- Muriel. I spent a
4 lot of time with Muriel -- my Muriel, that is.

5 Mayor Bracy and the fine and good people of this
6 community representing every walk of life, this is a very
7 special breakfast for me. I in fact haven't had breakfast
8 yet, but I did have some orange juice and coffee before I left
9 your neighboring community. I thought possibly when I arrived
10 here that maybe I ought to first earn my breakfast by saying
11 a few words, Phil, because I know you are the kind of a man
12 that likes to see one do his job. I am not at all sure the
13 speech is going to be good enough for steak and eggs. How are
14 you doing for rolls?

15 Mr. Berman has said this great store, this very great
16 institution known throughout America for its quality and, well,
17 as the center of fashion as Muriel told me and as I know, has
18 as its slogan that you find the best of everything in Hess's.
19 I think I found the best of everything here in this community
20 of Bethlehem, at Hess's, because as I walked into this little
21 nook, so to speak, where we are having breakfast, I took a
22 quick look at the audience and I saw here people from your
23 community that represented, as you said, Phil, the top manage-
24 ment of the great corporations, independent businessmen.

25 I know that from the listing that I had of your

1 guests that there are representatives here of organized labor,
2 of the different religious affiliations, of the different
3 ethnic groups, and this is the way we really ought to meet.
4 It does us so much good. One of the problems we have in
5 Washington is, as Fred Rooney will tell you, is that we tend
6 to meet with each other, politicians like to talk to politicians,
7 Congressmen to Congressmen and Senators to Senators. Of
8 course, one of the advantages of being President is that you
9 can talk to yourself.

10 But it is very worthwhile for people of different
11 walks of life, with different backgrounds and experiences,
12 to really learn how to communicate, to share our experiences
13 and to share our thoughts and our hopes. This morning I want
14 to just take a little of your time to talk about how we can
15 realize this great American dream.

16 There is a dream about our country that has lived
17 with our people since the beginning of this republic. That
18 dream is how ordinary people who come sometimes from very
19 humble surroundings are able to lift themselves to new levels
20 of human achievement, new standards of human dignity, and to
21 a realization of a new freedom for themselves and for their
22 country, a freedom that does not encroach upon the rights of
23 others, but a freedom that has developed out of the richness
24 of experience which really is founded upon respect for the
25 rights of others.

1 Dr. Martin Luther King in his message on that
2 memorable occasion on the march to Washington addressed an
3 assemblage of hundreds of thousands of people, and you will
4 recall the thrust of that message: "I have a dream." It was
5 a very moving message. And that dream that he had was the
6 dream of, as he put it very simply on one occasion, of having
7 his children being able to do anything, go anywhere, seek to
8 do what they want to do strictly on the basis of merit, that
9 they would be accepted as people, that they would be accepted
10 and they would be judged not on the basis of race or creed or
11 ethnic origin, but on the basis of their character and their
12 quality. And I think what he was trying to tell us was that
13 we ought to think of ourselves not so much as different people,
14 as we think of ourselves as Americans.

15 So I try to address the audiences of this country
16 as a candidate and as a public servant and as a citizen in
17 terms of how we Americans, whatever kind of person we may be,
18 how we look, how we talk, however we may spell our last name,
19 white or black, how we Americans can help build a better America.

20 Now, to say how you want to build a better America
21 sounds rather simple and sometimes there are those that say
22 that that is but a platitude, a generality. But the truth is
23 that every generation has had as its goal in this land of
24 ours "How do you build a better America?"

25 Sometimes a better America meant, for example, in

1 the early days of this republic, how do you expand its frontiers.
2 How do we move from the Atlantic to the Pacific? There was a
3 time that that meant a better America.

4 There was another time that the way we build a
5 better America was to decide whether or not this nation or
6 any other nation, so conceived and so dedicated, could long
7 endure, a nation with a government of the people, by the people
8 and for the people. That was building a better America.

9 The abolition of slavery was building a better
10 America. The establishment of the great school system of
11 America under the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 was building a
12 better America. The land grant college under the Morrow Act
13 of 1860 was building a better America. And the many amendments
14 to our Constitution extending the franchise to women was build-
15 ing a better America.

16 So we have constantly sought new ways in which we
17 could build a better country. The development of the great
18 industrial system of this nation was really building a better
19 America, to provide jobs, to permit the accumulation of capital
20 for the purposes of investment. Yes, our free enterprise
21 system and all it means is, I think, one of the greatest
22 factors and forces in building an America -- a better America.

23 The growth of the labor movement, the strengthening
24 of our great unions, the recognition of the right of collective
25 bargaining has surely built a better America. No doubt about it.

1 And now in these more recent days we have tried many things
2 that we think helps build a better America. For example, we
3 have found at the peak of our prosperity -- unprecedented
4 prosperity -- that we have in our midst a small minority, yet
5 it is a sufficient number of people to be of great concern
6 that do not share in that affluence and do not share in that
7 prosperity. It is both morally and economically wrong that
8 that is the case, and it is even politically wrong and some-
9 times politically dangerous.

10 This is the only country on the face of the earth,
11 my fellow Americans, in which the poor are a minority. And
12 the poor has no ethnic or racial line. In fact, there are
13 more white poor than there are black. There are more world
14 poor than there are urban. When you are poor, you are poor.
15 And it is not only the poverty of the purse that worries us
16 today -- of this group -- but it is the poverty of the spirit,
17 and it is to that that I prefer to address myself.

18 There is an easy way to correct poverty of the purse,
19 a hand-out -- just money. And I suppose that despite the
20 difficulties of earning enough money, if they were to put down
21 what are the easier things to do, it is to write a check or
22 hand out money and that would momentarily correct what we call
23 poverty of the purse, the poverty of economics, and sometimes
24 people have been prone to do that because it is so easy.

25 I said we even have what we call check book diplomacy.

1 When we are in a jam internationally we sometimes think we can
2 buy our way out of it, and many a family has thought all you
3 need to do for their children was to give them more money. You
4 and I now know, painfully sometimes through tragedy and through
5 sorrow, that that is not the way you build a family or create a
6 good home or a good neighborhood.

7 The fact of the matter is that what people want is
8 to be needed. What they want is to be respected. What they
9 want is to be included. So the war on poverty in this country
10 today -- and isn't it interesting that we should even take a
11 moment to listen to a man talk about the war on poverty in
12 this great center of merchandising in this more than affluent
13 community right here. But the good thing about America is that
14 every American wants to do a little better, and there is a
15 basic goodness in the American spirit, in the American
16 community. There is a willingness to share. There is a willing-
17 ness to want to do better.

18 Well, the war on poverty I speak of is the war on
19 the poverty of the spirit and that poverty of the spirit is
20 characterized by not being wanted, therefore unemployed, under-
21 employed, not having been respected, which is characterized by
22 illiteracy, lack of education, lack of training, and all of it
23 somehow or other blossoms into an ugly weed patch of hate and
24 bitterness and frustration. And it is these problems, these
25 symbols of bitterness and hate and frustration, these more

1 tangible, these more obvious matters of unemployment, being
2 illiterate and untrained that concerns us today.

3 Let me say to those that are the captains of industry
4 and the leaders of this community that every community has
5 these problems -- and some are major. Some communities have
6 more than others. But important to you is that in every one
7 of these communities of America where these problems exist they
8 are all correctable.

9 We are the only country on the face of the earth
10 that has all of the resources, human, physical, economic,
11 that are required to successfully wage a war on poverty and
12 win that war. We can do it. And when we do it, it will be
13 the greatest achievement of any civilization.

14 The question is do we have the will? Do we have the
15 determination? Do we have the dedication to do it?

16 I spoke in Newark yesterday and I reminded that
17 audience that our founding fathers, those who in their day
18 wanted a better America -- in fact, they wanted an America, a
19 free America -- those who signed the Declaration of Independence
20 -- and by the way they were very young men. Do you know the
21 average age of the signers of the Declaration of Independence
22 was 36, and that Thomas Jefferson was 28 when he wrote those
23 immortal words -- a very young man. So don't turn away youth.
24 Don't turn away the young, because they may have some very
25 good ideas.

1 Those young men that signed that declaration of in-
2 dependence listed out what they considered to be the same in-
3 alienable or God-given or natural rights that you and I have
4 today. Because if they are natural rights, if they are in-
5 alienable rights, if they are God-given rights, they live for-
6 ever, not rights given by government or constitution, not rights
7 that come just because somebody had a charter, but the right
8 of life and of liberty and of the pursuit of happiness. Those
9 are the characteristics of a free people, the right to life
10 itself, to survive, to be protected, the right of personal
11 safety. And let me make it crystal clear that when there are
12 people that call for law and order, when there are people that
13 say we must observe the law, when there are people that say
14 government must enforce the law, that this is not un-American.
15 It is essential and basic to a free society. A free society
16 does not long live in turmoil and violence. A free society
17 must have respect for its own laws.

18 But let me make it clear, it must make its own laws
19 and the people must be participants. We don't only ask for
20 life, but ask for a life that is meaningful, a life that is
21 worthwhile, a life that is enriched, a life that improves a
22 better America, and that is what we mean by the pursuit of
23 happiness. And I want to make it quite clear that I am going
24 to pursue those goals all my life.

25 What is more blessed than to find a happy home, a

1 happy community, not a happiness based upon frivolity and
2 commercial entertaining but a happiness that comes from the
3 spirit, from the harmony of life itself, from the recognition
4 that this society that we are trying to create has found its
5 way and has opened its doors as well as its heart to everyone.

6 So here in our time we are trying now to win a new
7 struggle. We are trying once again to emancipate man, just
8 as Lincoln emancipated the slaves. We are trying to emancipate
9 ourselves from fear, from discrimination, from doubt, from
10 violence, to emancipate ourselves from illiteracy.

11 Jefferson said "You can't be both free and ignorant."
12 You have to make a choice. We are now asking people to make
13 a choice and we are going to help them to make choices, be-
14 cause it does very little good to preach the doctrine of equal
15 rights unless you present an opportunity for those rights to be
16 meaningful. It does very little good to have a program that
17 guarantees equal opportunity and employment if there are no
18 jobs, and it does very little good to have a program that
19 guarantees under law equal employment opportunities if you are
20 not trained for a job.

21 It does very little good for us to talk about the
22 pursuit of life, liberty and property -- the right of liberty
23 and property as the 14th Amendment does in our Constitution --
24 unless you really believe that property can belong to the black
25 man as well as the white man -- to any man.

1 You know, I like private property. I want to get in
2 a plug for Humphrey's Drug Store. I have been a small
3 capitalist all my life. I like our system. I like it very
4 well. I think it is the most humanitarian, the most productive
5 system in the world. I always thought if private property made
6 me feel good, maybe it would make the other fellow feel good, too.
7 In other words, I believe in everybody having a piece of the
8 action. I believe in including everybody.

9 A great political scientist, political economist of
10 the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mills, once said "Let a man
11 have nothing to do for his country and he shall have no love
12 for it." I venture to say many of those who cause great
13 trouble have nothing to do for their country, therefore they
14 have no real love for it.

15 I want to dedicate my life in helping people having
16 something to do for their country, and if they have something
17 to do for their country they will have love for it. They will
18 protect it and die for it.

19 We are in the business now of trying to improve the
20 health of our people to make a better America, trying to im-
21 prove the quantity as well as the quality of education. We
22 are in the business of trying to keep the rivers and streams
23 clean and unpolluted and to clean the air we breathe and to
24 have clean water to drink -- such simple fundamental things --
25 so we can have a better America for our people.

1 That is what we are talking about, not just a better
2 America as a geographical entity, but as a human environment.
3 We are trying to improve the environment in which man lives, but
4 the best improvement we can make in that environment is in
5 our attitude. All the laws in the world will not bring
6 equality of treatment. All the laws in the world will not
7 open up the doors of opportunity unless we want to believe in
8 it, unless we practice it, not only in terms of the letter of
9 the law but the spirit of the law. And I really believe that
10 there is a sort of rebirth of spirit in this country. It is
11 coming about. We see it in the restlessness of our people, a
12 rebirth of spirit that says we are going to do better.

13 We know there are mistakes. We know there are in-
14 equities, and we know there is deprivation, and we are going
15 to do something about it. And when a society is willing to do
16 something about its problems that is a sign of strength, not
17 of weakness. That is a sign of health, not of sickness. The
18 sickest man in the world is the one that refuses to admit he
19 is sick or refuses to admit he has trouble.

20 The sign of a great people and a great person and of
21 a great society is when we recognize our limitations and then
22 set out to do something about them. But in the recognition
23 of that, don't undersell yourself. I am sure that Hess's did
24 not become what it is by the manager and the owner of this
25 establishment thinking that somehow or other they didn't have

1 a going proposition. You have to have faith in yourself. You
2 have to have faith in your country. You have to have faith
3 with a capital "F".

4 I am one of those Americans that goes across this
5 country not telling the young people of America that the in-
6 stitutions have failed them, not telling the young people of
7 America that America is sick, not telling the young people of
8 America that we are in a period of moral decay. I go across
9 this country telling them Yes, we have our problems. We have
10 great problems, great difficulties. But we are a great people.

11 I believe there are two kinds of ways of talking to
12 people. You can either frighten them and terrify them, and I
13 call that the policy of fear and despair, and that sometimes
14 does generate people to do some things. Or you can inspire
15 them. You can lift them. You can call upon their best. And
16 mark my words, there is an extra measure of strength in every-
17 body. We find it in moments of crisis. That is what I call the
18 politics of hope and the politics of faith.

19 Now, we have two kinds of politics in America and it
20 doesn't always relate to parties: those who believe in fear and
21 despair as a prod to the public, and those who believe in hope
22 and faith and progress as an inspiration to the public. I don't
23 think you can practice both at the same time. You have to make
24 your choice. You can't be both ignorant and free. You can't
25 be both a man of fear and a man of hope. You have to make your
decision.

1 Well, I made mine a long time ago. This country has
2 been good to me and it had been pretty good to you. I think
3 there is reason for hope in America, and I think there is
4 reason to have faith in this country, and I have it.

5 Thank you very much.

6 (APPLAUSE)

7 MR. BERMAN: Thank you, Mr. Vice President.

8 And thanks from all of us at Hess's for joining us
9 here at the Patio.

10 VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: By the way, I also believe
11 in the politics of pressing the flesh.

12 (LAUGHTER).

13 (End of speech)

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