

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY'S ADDRESS TO NEW YORK STATE DEMOCRATIC  
DELEGATES - AUGUST 17, 1968 - WALDROF-ASTORIA, N.Y. (GOLD ROOM)

INTRODUCTION BY FRANK O'CONNOR

Frank O'Connor

As we were going around the room, I heard Romaine Weil say this is a fun party, and it is. I don't know any better way to spoil a fun party than to have a lot of speeches and we're not going to have them. I'm merely going to present our distinguished and our great guest of honor because it's a great proud moment for all of us to have him here.

I just would say very briefly that I think that we can see now after what happened in Miami, the thing that I have been talking about for three years, this rising trend in America, along a conservative line, and the tremendous, terrific importance that exists in this country today to elect a Democrat as President of the United States. How terribly important it is. So I want to welcome all of you. I know there are many of you here today, because I have talked to you, who are not committed to the Vice President. You have your own candidate, which is perfectly all right. We didn't bring you here to put any pressure on you of any kind. We brought you here in a spirit of friendship and fellowship and to talk to you and to look forward to what will happen after the convention takes place in Chicago next week.

You know, things happened in Buffalo, too. They are not going to happen that way in Chicago.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am delighted and proud to present to you the next President of the United States, the Vice President, the Honorable Hubert H. Humphrey.

Vice President Humphrey

Thank you very much Frank. For a moment I wasn't sure that I was at the right meeting, and I don't mean the Buffalo part of your comment. But when you said that you had brought no one here for the purpose of putting on any pressure, I tell you, I just tell you, I am in the wrong room.

No, in all candor and honesty, I was advised a long time ago that there were these three places a man ought not to make a serious speech - at a barbecue and a rodeo. You all know where I got that information, and secondly at a cocktail party. I got that information out of some years of experience. But I am very happy to be here with you, and I am very happy that you were kind enough and thoughtful enough to come here and spend a little while in good fellowship and good fun.

I've had a very busy day, one that I think has added up to some good positive results. Over these last two or three days we have travelled in New Jersey and Pennsylvania and out in my state of Minnesota and back here now in New York, where we started on Wednesday evening, and it has been a very, very significant change in what I consider to be the political atmosphere. Since our Republican friends were kind enough to make their decision, and I didn't know they would be so kind to us - but since their decision, there has been, I believe, a sort of new interest on the part of many of our fellow Americans on what's happening to the country and what is going to happen in our party.

I made a little tour here down in New Jersey and over in the state of Pennsylvania primarily just to talk to a citizens group that we were trying to organize in one state and the delegates in New Jersey and then two meetings of delegates in Pennsylvania. I went to them and said to them what I say to you. I don't come to count the votes, I come to merit them and hopefully to earn them. That's the way I look at the whole process. I've never considered anything to be a sure bet. I've always considered that the best that a man should expect for himself and for others is an even chance, a chance to make his case.

Well, we've just had some really wonderful, rewarding experiences. Mrs. Humphrey and I were down in Corpus Christi, Texas, the other day. Oh, was it ever hot. I'll tell you, it was blistering, but we had thousands of people there to greet us - literally thousands. Many of them were Mexican Americans, friends, that came out. I spoke to the G.I. Forum there, which is one of the old liberal organizations. In fact, Dr. Hector Garcia took his stand in the same year that I took mine - in 1948 - when we both for different reasons took our stand on the whole issue of human rights and civil rights.

Then, we went to San Antonio and we had the largest crowd that ever attended the fair at the Hemisfair that day. I am happy to say that it was larger than any of the other public officials has been able to attract up until that time. We came away from a series of meetings there. The last one that we had was about 6 O'clock at night. There were about 7,000 people - attendants at a sort of little outdoor outing in what they call an amphitheater.

The other day, Friday, we were in Allentown and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. We came in to an airport there around 6 O'clock or 7:30 at night. We didn't send any advance team in to, you know, sort of rouse the populace, to get 'em out. It was just announced that we were going to come. My little notes that I have, they always plan my life, you know - I get all these papers; I got a whole series of them. They tell me everything or almost everything I am supposed to do and when I am supposed to do it. It doesn't always work out right. But they said you will have four or five hundred people here. We had over 5,000.

We came into Pittsburgh Friday noon. I came there to meet with the delegates of western Pennsylvania just as I had in Allentown and Bethlehem with delegates of eastern Pennsylvania. And we had, according to the Police in that city, and I always like to deduct a few - there's a tendency to be a little on the exaggerating side, even though I like exaggeration when it applies to me. I want you to know that they said we had 15,000 people there. And it was just to stop off just to say hello. There is a new feeling and I think that new feeling is due to the fact that people know now that the hour of decision, or the month of decision, the time is coming.

Now, in this party of ours - I hate to tell you New Yorkers this because you're such a proud people - but you're going to have to settle for somebody from Minnesota. That's just too bad. Now, I used to say that in utter and complete confidence but after today when Mr. Maddox made his declaration, I am not so sure.

You know, you can just depend upon the Democrats just to add that little extra something to it that louses it all up real good. I don't know what's going to happen this next week. Are any of you planning on declaring?

Well, really, one of my other good friends - this is very informally with you, and I just want to be really informal. This is the most paradoxical and ironical, and yet the most enjoyable and unpredictable situation a man could ever be in. Senator McCarthy and I have been working together in the political vineyards for over 20 years and as I've told some of the more avid supporters on each side, and boy we do have them, I wish you would come talk to us personally before you decide to choose up sides. I said you know I don't intend to have a personal friendship of some 20 years broken to bits on the anvil of partisan politics. I really don't, so I don't spend any time talking down about my friend, the Senator, or talking about him except to tell you two or three things. He is a very distinguished man, a very intelligent man, a very gifted man and a very good friend. And if he is nominated, he won't have any worries about where I am going to be. I am going to support him right down the line. I am going to support him and I tell you why - Because I am just not going to be responsible for turning this country back to Mr. Nixon. I am not going to do that. I think that would be really, if I may so, quite frankly, I think this would be a terrible betrayal.

I remember the election of 1960. That election was hard fought. I said jokingly but I said also rather seriously that I knew that Nixon couldn't beat John Kennedy because after all, I gave President Kennedy his spring training. I knew what he could do. And when I was through with the primaries, and the primaries had worked me over, even though I won one and lost only two, the two that I lost, I never lost any of them below 42 per cent. I am doing pretty good. But after I lost them and we come into that general election, I was there and I was doing my part.

This Democratic Party is a little bit bigger than the individuals who participate in it. And I say that not just out of sort of general platitudes, but this Party has governed this country a long time - its leaders. And, it has given this country the basis of its social policy. What we have today, much of it in terms of our prosperity, of our social progress, much in terms of what we have as people is due to this Party and its leadership. And, I happen to believe that I have a responsibility to the country, to my Party and to many of those with whom I work.

Now, there is another man that is in this race. His name is George McGovern. Now, let me tell you, I got George McGovern into politics. I went and called on his home, and Eleanor and George are two of the closest friends that Muriel and Hubert Humphrey have. This is the darnedest thing I have ever seen. I didn't mean to field this whole crowd for you. I really didn't. It's a fact.

Now, how in the name of common sense can I get out here and start being very angry at anybody when you feel this way. So, I think the best thing that we have going for us in the Democratic Party is that the people who are there you are thinking about. I hope you're thinking about me. If you're not, I would like to visit with you privately over here in the corner, girls. You fellows can all gather over there. But whomever you're thinking about, I think you ought to know that we're not enemies.

We have differences as intelligent, liberal people should. And yet those differences are not as wide as many people would like to make them. And what is more important, I happen to believe that I have a responsibility if I am the nominee of this Party to support my platform, the platform of my Party. You're not just an individual. You're a representative of a great movement. And you're the representative of many other people. Now, I am going to ask you to do just one thing. Many of you delegates here, I gather from what I've heard, a few of you here are for me - there's another group that's for Mr. McCarthy - they're some that are uncommitted. I just want you to know there's no need to be going through all of that - I'll be glad to have all of you.

But whatever your position will ultimately be in Chicago, let's remember one thing - there isn't any reason at all that we can't come out of that convention with at least respect for one another, if we act respectfully. I know we're going to as

individuals, but we've got a job to teach others the same thing. All of these Democrats that I've mentioned - we're all for human rights, we're all for social progress in this country, and we're all for peace. Make no mistake about it.

The only feeling I have that kind of bothers me and you always get something that kind of grates on you a little bit - I spent a lifetime in public service trying to speak the cause of peace when others were running away from the thought of a nuclear test ban treaty. There were at least two in this country - Adlai Stevenson and Hubert Humphrey - that stood for it. Fifteen years ago, ten years ago I did. And when it came down to the Peace Corps, when it was called a kind of a way for kids to just have a safari out here, I stood for it and I sponsored it and I passed it. And when it came to the issue of civil rights, I sponsored civil rights when it was one way to be sure that you were unpopular. And you know it.

But let me make it crystal clear. Others have supported these programs, and so what I'm trying to say to you is that we really are basically committed - we're basically committed to these same objectives. I'm committed to trying to find an honorable and a prompt way of getting a just peace in Vietnam that doesn't sacrifice those of our own people that have already sacrificed their lives - that doesn't sacrifice the well-being and the self-determination of the people in Southeast Asia and yet, at the same time, it doesn't demand unconditional surrender - that doesn't impose a military solution on what you and I know is essentially a political problem.

You know there are no easy answers to these things and one thing that you ought to keep clearly in mind is that anybody who comes to us - no matter who he is - and says, look I've got the answer, you just follow me for 15 minutes - that fellow is not the man that you ought to put your trust in.

Well, enough serious talk. I'd like to visit with you informally and pleasantly. I'd just as soon, if you don't mind, just go over and have myself a little drink, too.

Thank you all very much.

By the way, before I break it up, I want to thank John Burns for being here. John, it's awfully nice of you to be here and I hope none of you will think me rude and ill-mannered for forgetting another one - You know, my father was a great Democrat before me and he brought me up, as we say, in the faith, and the man who preached the faith to him is Jim Farley. Thank you Jim.



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