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REMARKS & Herbert H. Lehman

THE HONORABLE HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

NEW YORK CITY

APRIL 22, 1969

It is a pleasure to appear before the American Jewish Committee in my new role as V.P. -- visiting professor, that is.

I cannot pretend that I would not rather be President ... but, in all honesty, these last few months have been very precious, very rewarding, very revealing.

These have been months of greater reflection ... and months of considerable intellectual challenge, especially on the college campus.

If I had my way, I'd require that every public official be forced to take a sabbatical every now and then -- and forced to spend some time being exposed to the uninhibited cross-examinations of college students -- and of college professors.

↳ I even have a few public officials I could nominate right now.!

↳ In the last twenty years we have developed some good answers and some good programs to meet our great challenges -- and we should proceed to implement these ideas and to invest the resources needed for maximum results.

↳ But tonight I want to talk to you about gaps in our understanding -- about the uncertainties of our knowledge -- and about the need to subject every bit of "conventional wisdom" to searching review.

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< ^{classroom} In my ~~classes~~ I'm always being challenged. And I've been doing a good deal of challenging myself. But I must confess that I am not entirely pleased with some of the answers I have been giving -- or those I've been getting. !

What better place could there be than the American Jewish Committee to speak out on this subject? And what more appropriate function than the ^{Lehman} Herbert A. Lehman Memorial dinner -- an evening to honor the memory of a great American who challenged every bit of conventional wisdom of this society, especially when this wisdom restricted or denied the rights of the less fortunate among us.

< For over sixty years the ^{it} Committee has been in the forefront of the effort to understand what makes people behave the way they do ... why there is bigotry and prejudice and

group conflict ... and how to improve relations between people and between groups.

↳ So tonight I want to commend the American Jewish Committee for its contribution to public understanding of basic problems. But, I want to do more than commend you. I wish to urge you to do more -- much more!

↳ Two recent studies have prompted my remarks tonight.

↳ Both have jarred many of us. Both surely must be only the beginning -- because the reports of both studies appear to contradict much that we have seen and much that we have believed.

↳ But we must never fear to explore because earlier beliefs may be shaken. ↳ We must be willing to explore further because there can be terrible damage and terrible misunderstanding

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" a little knowledge is a dangerous thing "

if only partial knowledge -- or partial reports of knowledge --
are simplistically stated and simplistically interpreted.

↳ I refer, first, to the highly controversial Jensen study
on the relative significance of environmental and genetic
influences on intelligence and, secondly, to last week's study
of Head Start, that wonderful anti-poverty program for
disadvantaged pre-school children.

↳ In both cases, I fear, initial public disclosures have
already buttressed the prejudices and the antagonisms that
some Americans feel towards other Americans and towards
public efforts to help people. These initial disclosures --
incomplete and often misleading -- could be disastrous to the
causes which you and I have placed at the top of America's
agenda.

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But should these concerns make us want to suppress the studies or condemn them out of hand? I would hope not.!

It is now our responsibility to examine the studies, not the immediate news and editorial coverage of them; but the full studies; to subject the findings to searching analysis, and to match those findings with all other knowledge we have or can obtain -- so that ultimately we may face the total picture and then determine what, if any, modifications in our social policy may be required.

I have never believed -- ~~I do not now believe~~ -- and I am certain that I will never accept -- the notion of any racial or group superiority or inferiority. ~~San Francisco~~

There are indeed, let us say it bluntly, superior people and inferior people. But there are no "superior" or "inferior" peoples.

But,

We must never permit attitudes to be developed or social policies to be enacted which would evaluate individuals as members of any group. That's what prejudice is all about.

I do not hold this view simply as political or spiritual dogma. The simple fact which I have experienced throughout my life is that there is a wide spectrum of brilliance and sensitivity and spirituality in every single people. There are geniuses on our Indian reservations, in Africa, on Israeli kibbutzim, and some even on the faculty and in the student body at Harvard!

And there are scoundrels whose skins are white or yellow or black -- and in-between, rich or poor, educated or ignorant.

↳ The basic truth we must always remember is that each individual must be judged on his own worth and must be given every opportunity to expose and develop that worth. Eleanor Roosevelt, in one of her last books, said it with her typical simple eloquence:

"Everyone who believes that in every human being there is a spark of the divine, that he is not an animal, must believe that to help that human being achieve the fullness of his potential is the greatest service which his government can fulfill."

↳ That's it in a nutshell. We have an obligation to let each of God's creatures grow, without unfair barriers or limitations. But how? That's what we have been trying to do these many years -- but with uneven success.

└ This is where the Jensen and the Head Start studies could give us some clues -- and we must be willing and ready to look for clues.

└ Is it possible that after several hundred years of deprivations, some Negro children -- and some white children, as well -- suffer not only the generally understood environmental handicaps but have been damaged even genetically? Is the malnutrition, even starvation, we find among poor people today a significant factor in genetic damage to children born to such people? What new and better remedies must be developed to meet any of these new findings -- ^(the findings) if they are indeed substantiated?

└ In the Head Start study, we were told last week that gains made by children in the program seem to vanish rapidly,

└ Some persons have already jumped to the hasty conclusion

that here's another Federal program that seems to have been a failure and a waste of hundreds of millions of dollars.

↳ On a purely personal basis, and without getting into the dispute over the accuracy or methodology of the study itself, I just refuse to accept such a verdict. I have been in many a Head Start class. I have seen the kids. I have seen the parents, who have been actively involved in the program.

↳ I have spoken with the teachers and the doctors and the social workers who have helped these children. They are obviously being helped, and significantly.

↳ As I understand the Head Start study, it is essentially suggesting that many of the gains are not retained -- not that there are no gains. In a year or two, we are told, the Head Start children do not seem to be significantly better off than those poor kids who had not had this experience.

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There is now considerable doubt over the accuracy
and reliability of this study ... and I'm not surprised. But
let us assume some of the evidence is upheld in later studies,
the question then becomes: Why are the gains of Head Start
not retained?

Is it because of something inherently wrong with Head
Start -- or is it with the school system which enrolls the
children, or with the homes in which the children continue
to live, or the social decay of their neighborhoods?

I have cited these two recent and specific developments
just to illustrate the need for greater study and understanding
in critical areas of social policy. But, there are other, even
more basic questions, for which we do not now have satisfactory
answers:

- (1) First, what is the basic explanation for the rebelliousness, the nihilism, the arrogance of some of our college students these days? Is it really only superficially different from previous generations -- or, is there something frighteningly different this time? What are the similarities as well as the differences between the American and the European experience?
- (2) Second, why, when we seemed to be on the brink of a real breakthrough in desegregation in the United States, have some elements in the black community given up and actually embraced the very separatism that was once so hateful?
- (3) Third, do we have enough understanding of the use of violence in both our domestic and our foreign affairs? Are we reverting back to the law of the jungle? Are we abandoning the rule of reason and substituting brute force?

└ These are just a few critical, social issues that go to an understanding of man's basic thinking and spiritual processes.

└ On a more practical problem-solving level, we must grapple with new dimensions of concern:

-- How do we turn this nation and this world from the suicidal arms race and to a greater acceptance of world order and world rule and world peace? └ And how do we capture the vast resources being used to build the works of war and use them in the cause of peace?

└ -- Can we really do something effective, in time, to ~~stop~~ control the population explosion?

└ -- What procedures and devices can we develop that will permit the powerless to participate fully in the basic decisions of this society, that is, to share in the power?

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L These are not American problems alone. Certainly they are not Democratic or Republican problems. Or Jewish problems.

Z But unless we get greater understanding of these, and other, great issues, then it will matter little whether President Nixon's legislative program is enacted or not, or who will be President in 1972 or 1976.

L ^{*some hard*} There is ~~much difficult~~ thinking to be done in the years ahead. Many of our most cherished assumptions and beliefs must be challenged and reshaped.

L Many of today's problems cry out for immediate solutions, and we must try to develop the best answers we can -- under the circumstances.

L₂ But we must also be generous in allocating sufficient manpower, sufficient time, sufficient resources to keep working

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on the great intellectual challenges which go to the roots of the human condition.

We must, as a nation, continue to look to groups like the American Jewish Committee, uninhibited by the limitations of public policy or Congressional approval, to move ahead in extending the frontiers of human knowledge.

Each of you is serving humanity itself by making such work possible.

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Remarks
The Honorable N.W.U.
American Jewish Committee
New York City
April 22, 1969

4/10/69

Humphrey Speech to AJC New York -- April 22, 1969

It is pleasant to appear before the American Jewish Committee in my new role as V.P. -- President Professor, that is.

I cannot pretend that I would not rather be President.... but these last few months have been very precious, very rewarding, very revealing. ^{These} They have been months that ^{of greater} permitted more time for reflection, for just plain cogitation. And they ^{considerable} have been months of intellectual challenge, especially on the college campus.

If I had my way, I'd require that every public official be forced to take a sabbatical every now and then -- and forced to spend some time being exposed to the uninhibited cross-examinations of college students -- and of college professors.

I even have a few public officials I could nominate right now.

~~I believe in action. And I like to think that I have been responsible in my time for some positive action, some useful and exciting new programs....Peace Corps, Food for Peace, Civil rights laws, the Disarmament Agency, for example.~~

~~I think that~~ ^I in the last 20 years we have developed some good answers and some good programs to meet our great challenges -- and we should proceed to implement these ideas and to invest the resources needed for maximum results.

But tonight I want to talk to you about gaps in our understanding -- about the uncertainties of our knowledge -- and ^{about} the need to subject every bit of "conventional wisdom" to searching review. In my classes I'm always being challenged. And I've been doing a good deal of challenging myself. But I must confess that I am not entirely pleased with some of the answers I have been giving -- or those I've been getting.

What better place could there be than the American Jewish Committee to speak out on this subject? For over sixty years the Committee has been in the forefront of the effort to understand ~~better than we~~ ^{...} have what makes people behave the way they do, why there is bigotry

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... and

and prejudice and group conflict, how to improve relations between people and between groups.

While you have not refrained from action, you have given the first priority to social research and understanding. Your historic and definitive study, THE AUTHORITARIAN ^{PERSONALITY} ~~PERMANITY~~, for example, has for 20 years now provided rich insight and has in turn stimulated literally hundreds of additional studies, not only here in the United States but around the world. The research you sponsored in the early 1950's contributed to the Supreme Court decision banning school segregation.

So tonight I want to commend the American Jewish Committee for its contribution to public understanding of basic problems. But I want to do more than commend you. I wish to urge you to do more -- much more.

Two recent studies have prompted my remarks tonight. Both have jarred many of us. Both surely must be only the beginning -- because ^{the reports of both studies} ~~both~~ appear to contradict so much that we have seen and ~~so~~ much that we have believed. But we must never fear to explore because earlier beliefs may be shaken. We must be willing to explore further because there can be terrible damage and terrible misunderstanding if ^{-- on partial reports of knowledge -- are} only partial knowledge ~~is~~ simplistically stated and simplistically interpreted.

^{first,} I refer to the ^{highly controversial Jensen study} ~~recent study by Dr. _____~~ Jenkins on the relative significance of environmental and genetic influences on intelligence. ^{secondly,} and to last week's study of Head Start, that wonderful anti-poverty program for disadvantaged pre-school children. In both cases, I fear, initial public disclosures have already buttressed the prejudices and the antagonisms that some Americans feel towards other Americans and towards public efforts to help people. These initial disclosures

-- incomplete + often misleading --

^ could be disastrous to the causes which you and I have placed high on America's agenda.

^ But should these concerns ~~of ours~~ make us want to suppress the studies or condemn them out of hand? I would hope not. ~~It happens~~ that both of these studies were conducted by ~~basically~~ sympathetic and sensitive individuals. It is now ~~our~~ responsibility ~~of all of us~~ to examine the studies, not the immediate news and editorial coverage of them, but the full studies, to subject the findings to searching analysis, and to match those findings with all other knowledge we have or can obtain -- so that ultimately we may face the total picture and then determine what, if any, modifications in our social policy may be required.

^ I have never believed -- I do not now believe -- and I am certain that I will never accept -- the notion of any racial or group superiority or inferiority. ^ There are indeed, let us say it bluntly, superior people and inferior people. But there are no "superior" or "inferior" peoples. ^ ~~And we must never permit attitudes to be developed or social policies to be enacted which would evaluate individuals as members of any group. That's what prejudice is all about. ^ Each individual is in fact equal before the law and before his God. But that has never meant that each individual is endowed with precisely the same potential for growth and development.~~

^ I do not hold this view simply as political or spiritual dogma. The simple fact which I have experienced throughout my life is that there is a wide spectrum of brilliance and sensitivity and spirituality in every single people I ever observed. There are geniuses on our Indian reservations, in darkest Africa, on Israeli kibbutzim, and some even on the faculty and in the student body at Harvard. ^ And there are

scoundrels whose skins are white or yellow or black -- and in-between, rich or poor, educated or ignorant.

Jensen
[No ~~Jenkins~~ studies or simplistic interpretations thereof can ever change the fact that American Negroes have been among the most brilliant, sensitive, creative individuals that have ever blessed this land. Need I do more than just mention the names of some contemporary American blacks -- Thurgood Marshall, Ralph Bunche, Robert Weaver, Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young,.....]

[The basic truth *we must always remember* that must continue to cut across every study and every program is that each individual must be judged on his own worth and must be given every opportunity to expose and develop that worth. Eleanor Roosevelt, in one of her last books, said it with her typical simple eloquence:

"Everyone who believes," she said, "that in every human being there is a spark of the divine, that he is not an animal, must believe that to help that human being achieve the fullness of his potential is the greatest service which his government can fulfill."

[That's it in a nutshell. We have an obligation to let each of God's creatures grow, without unfair barriers or limitations. But how? That's what we have been trying to do these many years -- but with uneven success.

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[This is where the ~~Jenkins~~ and the Head Start studies could give us some clues -- and we must be willing and ready to look for clues.

[Is it possible that after several hundred years of deprivations, some -- *and some white children, as well --* Negro children suffer not only the generally understood environmental handicaps but have been damaged even genetically? Is the malnutrition, even starvation, we find among poor people today a significant factor in genetic damage to children born to such people? What new and better

And without getting into the dispute over the accuracy or methodology of the ~~Head Start~~ study itself,

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-- if they are ^{indeed} substantiated?

remedies must be developed to meet any of these new findings.

In the Head Start study, we were told last week that ~~Head Start~~ ^{made by children in the program} gains seem to vanish ^{pretty soon}. And ^{persons} some have already jumped to the

hasty conclusion that here's another Federal program that seems to have

been a failure and a waste of hundreds of millions of dollars. ~~But~~

that study, I believe, ^{demonstrates} proves more that we have failed generally as a

total society, that ~~that~~ Head Start itself failed. On a purely personal

basis, I just refuse to accept such a verdict. I have been in many a

Head Start class. I have seen the kids, I have seen the parents, who

have been actively involved in the program; I have spoken with the

teachers and the doctors and the social workers who have helped these

~~children~~ kids. They are obviously being helped, and significantly.

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~~But the Head Start study is not necessarily telling us an un-~~
~~truth.~~ ^{suggesting} ^{many of} What they are saying is that the gains are not retained, not

that there are no gains. In a year or two, we are told, the Head

Start children do not seem to be significantly better off than those

poor kids who had not had this experience. Well, the question is, ^{over}

~~why not?~~ Is it because of something inherently wrong with Head Start

-- or ^{is it} with the school system which picks him up, ^{with} or the home in which he

continues to live, or the social decay of the neighborhood he lives in?

I have cited these two recent and specific developments just

to illustrate the need for greater study and understanding. But there

are others, even more basic questions, for which we do not ^{now} have really

satisfactory answers:

^{First} What is the basic explanation for the rebelliousness, the

nihilism, the arrogance of some of our college students these

days? Is it really only superficially different from previous

generations -- or is there something frighteningly different

this time? What are the similarities as well as the differences between the American and the European experience?

Second:

2. Why, when we seemed to be on the brink of a real breakthrough in desegregation in the United States, have some elements in the black community given up and actually embraced the very separatism that was once so hateful?

Third:

3. Do we have enough understanding of the use of violence in both our domestic and our foreign affairs? Are we reverting back to the law of the jungle? Are we abandoning the rule of reason and substituting brute force?

Fourth:

4. Is today's sex revolution a manifestation of a more general decay and permissiveness, with ominous portent, or is it a "passing fancy," part of regular ebb and flow in cultural tastes?

These are just a few critical, social issues that go to an understanding of man's basic thinking and spiritual processes. But

on a more practical problem-solving level, we must grapple with new dimensions of concern:

1. How do we turn this nation and this world from the suicidal arms race and to a greater acceptance of world order and world rule and world peace?

2. How do we better manage our gargantuan federal machinery? How do we create the Creative Federalism we've been talking about?

3. Can we solve our water and air pollution threat before it is too late?

2. Can we really do something effective, in time, to stop

(And how do we capture the vast resources being used to build the works of war and use them in the coming peace?)

3. What procedures & devices can we develop that will permit the powerless to participate fully in the basic decisions of this society, that is, to ~~become~~ share in the power?

~~These are illustrations of the kind of major challenges facing humanity as we approach the end of the twentieth century.~~ ^{These} They are not American problems alone. Certainly they are not Democratic or Republican problems. Or Jewish problems. But unless we get greater understanding of these, and other, great issues, then it will matter little whether President Nixon's legislative program is enacted or not, or who will be President in 1972 or 1976, -- or even who wins the next ~~Six-Day War in the Mid East, vital as each of these issues is.~~

^{different} There is much thinking to be done in the years ^{ahead.} Many of today's problems cry out for immediate solutions, and we must try to develop the best ^{answers we can -- under the circumstances.} programs. But we must be generous in allocating ^{also} sufficient manpower, sufficient time, sufficient resources to keep working on the ^{challenges which go to the roots of the human condition.} great intellectual problems of our age. We must, as a nation, continue to look to groups like the American Jewish Committee, uninhibited by the limitations of public policy or Congressional approval, to move ahead in extending the frontiers of human knowledge.

Each of you is serving humanity itself by making such work possible.

Many of our most cherished assumptions and beliefs ~~must~~ ^{must} be challenged and reshaped.



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