

Address by the Honorable
Hubert H. Humphrey
at the
Campaign Opening Dinner
of the
General Jewish Committee of Rhode Island
September 29, 1969

October 3, 1969

THE GENERAL JEWISH COMMITTEE

Presents

THE HONORABLE HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

"Worthy and distinguished Rabbis and leaders of this great community, our friends, and of course, our distinguished Governor, you know it's always good to be introduced by a very good friend. He never lets truth stand in the way of a good introduction, and both the Governor and I tonight have had the rare privilege of having a totally objective introduction by ~~very~~ subjective people who are willing to overlook our shortcomings. And Governor, I want you to know that I like what you had to say too; particularly, what you said about me. I learned tonight that it is not always well to be modest after I heard the Governor say those things about the ladies. And I also understand why the ladies aren't here tonight: they would have left the Governor in ~~droves~~ if they could have seen me! No, it isn't so; I hear he has a way about him and I want to just say how very happy I am to be here with him. Now I was met today by one of your most illustrious citizens along with your Governor, Mr. Max ~~Alperin~~, and it's so good to have shared this time tonight as his table guest and his partner here. I know that you're all very devoted to him and he to you. He has worked in the leadership here of the General Jewish Committee of Rhode Island is of course, of significance to all of us. I've looked all around the room, I've jotted down just a few notes that might seem somewhat pertinent to you; I hope somewhat of some use to you. Governor Licht is very happy tonight to have with him, members of his family--I know what that means. I gather that this is about the only way you can ever get to see your family, Governor. I know that's the way it was when I was in public office.

First of all, what a wonderful privilege it is because I lost my Father when I first came to the Senate. What a wonderful privilege it is for a man who becomes Governor of a State of our great Federal union to have his father here -- and his Father Jacob is here tonight. (Dad, stand up there). And I know that Dad, Father Jacob, was wondering how his son was doing. He's been around here polling : he said, " How is my son doing?" Well, I can tell you, Father Jacob, that your son Frank is doing alright, and doing not only alright, but very, very good! And then just to make sure that everything is covered here tonight and none of you get away without being properly contacted for whatever future that we may want to contact you about, Uncle Harry is here tonight too; and brothers Harry and Julius are here tonight as well. Not only brothers Harry and Julius, but nephews Richard and Gary.. I'll say one thing about Governor Licht, when he comes to a meeting he comes prepared for every eventuality. And Bob Riesman introduced me because I guess that he was the one man they knew that had literally put his life on the line for me, and he surely did so in this last election. I would like to publicly thank him now for all his help. And Bob's father is here as well. I met his dad here tonight, came up heret~~to~~the head table. I believe his father's name is Joseph, and I would just like to pay my respects to him. Max, I didn't forget that your son Mel is here too, and he is right up front; just wanted you to know that. Well, I'm not going to take all the time about family, but there's so many here -- Mr. Thaler, Mr. Grossman, Mr. Gordon, and others, that have spoken to us and each of them leaders. Maybe you noticed some of the picture taking up here. Now they weren't just trying to take my picture, even though I'm perfectly willing to stand at any time if anybody wants to take my picture. But these were men that have given and given beyond the call of duty.

These programs, as we have noted tonight, are not automatically successful; and I want to pay my tribute and respects to the city leaders, the community leaders, the area leaders all across this state, because this is an organization job. It takes time and sacrifice and organization to do what you have done here tonight. Yesterday, my dear friends, I had luncheon with a very great person. A friend of many, many years, one who spent many of her early years in the Midwest -- very close to a wonderful state called Minnesota. And she lived in the state of Wisconsin, and she lived and worked in the city of Milwaukee. I refer to the lady that has been already referred to here tonight. The very able, gifted, dedicated Prime Minister of the state of Israel, Golda Meir. Golda Meir is one of the truly remarkable people of our time. She's a talented leader, and she stated the case for Israel, for freedom, for relationship between the United States and Israel in more concise in ~~succinct~~ terms yesterday under cross examination from the best that our press has to offer than any person that I have heard in my time. I think we are deeply indebted to her. Well, I spent about two hours with her after that broadcast yesterday, and she said, "What are you going to be doing this week, Mr. Humphrey?", and I said, "Well I have a busy week. I'm going up to the University of New Hampshire," where I've been today." "I'm going to stop off in Boston where I might say a word for a fellow democrat," as I did today. I didn't mean to inject too much partisanship here, but I just thought I'd get a little in while I had a chance. Then I said, "I'm going to go to Providence where I've been scheduled for some time to speak to a fine gathering of the Jewish Community for the General Jewish Committee of Rhode Island, and their excellent work in all of their many charities and programs." I get a number of privileges in my life, but I am privileged tonight to be the carrier or the courier of good news. Rather than just a piece

of paper or a telegram, I come fresh from the conversation; and that message to you from the Prime Minister of Israel is a message of her thanks, of her gratitude, of her appreciation for what you've already done, for what you're going to do, and what I hope tonight before we're through here "the more than you planned on doing" because we are here for a real serious purpose. This lady, this leader, this strong leader depends on you, depends upon every one of us to do the best that is within us. She didn't write out a message for me. We talked for two hours about America, about Israel, about this troubled world in which we live; about the Soviet Union, about France, about Britain, about all the things that are happening in this troubled world, and in particular, the Middle East. I reported to the Prime Minister as I have to our President and to our Secretary of State of the United States and others, of my visits overseas this year in the month of July. I had the opportunity as some of you may know, of a long visit with the Chairman of the Council ^{of} Ministers of the Soviet Union, Mr. Kosygin. I visited with a number of people in the Soviet Union in lesser capacities, but in important offices. I visited with the Prime Minister of Great Britain, I visited with the leaders of Denmark, of Finland, of Yugoslavia, and in each case I visited about our common concerns. It would not do well for me or for the cause that we believe in for me to detail tonight, some of the intimacies or some of the more intimate facts of those conversations. But I can say to you, that I think I stated the case for the United States of America and for our relationship with Israel, for our interest in the Middle East in every capital that I had the privilege of visiting and with every leader that I had the privilege of talking to. And let me, therefore, in the time that you're giving me, because we're here for serious business, try to capsule what I believe is the common cause. Now every man in this room is a good American citizen. I understand that our professor from Israel may not as yet

be a citizen of the United States, but I'll tell you he's a good man! And therefore, somebody might say, " Why is it Mr. Humphrey that you come to this audience and you plead the cause of a country that is not the United States?" Well, let me make the record clear; I plead the cause of the United States because the United States is safer, is better when more and more people throughout this world are safe and free. The United States of America is stronger, is more secure, is better when more and more people have the courage to stand up and defend themselves. When more and more people understand the precious gift of freedom-- when more and more people are willing to commit their lives to the cause of freedom. I only wish that every nation and every people were as steadfast in their love of their independence and their freedom and parliamentary institutions and all that we call representative government, as the people of the state of Israel. I've said a number of times, that if I were to select one single country in this world that fulfilled what I consider to be the hopes and the aspirations of the finest ideals of American foreign policy, not always how it works out, not always how we practice it, but the goals and the ideals of American foreign policy, I think I can say that that country has been the state of Israel, and I'll tell you why.

First of all, when we speak of Israel, when we think of her, when we help her, we are not helping a dictatorship. We are not helping a military Junta, we're not helping or defending or showing our interest in a people who have cast aside, been the name of **emergency** ^{law}, in the name of defense, have cast aside every vestige of parliamentary government. Many countries do that. Here is ~~is~~ Israel twenty some years beleaguered twenty some years of living in danger, constantly threatened at every border, literally fighting for the breath of life; and my fellow Americans, she has yet to ever cancel an election. She has yet to ever violate civil liberties, and she has yet to cast aside

her constitution. She stands there, mighty and proud, though small in size, living and breathing the very life and spirit of democracy and freedom--I think that's important. Then there is a sense of humanitarianism. I looked at this remarkable publication and I want you to know I'm an old hand at going to dinners like this. You haven't been to as many as I have been, I can tell you that. I've attended more B'nai B'rith meetings than most of you; I do feel Jewish I want you to know it! And I started early. But when I looked at this publication and was able to observe the number of beneficiary agencies of this effort, of this combined effort, it gave me a message all unto itself. You know our *own* great country does not depend just on the government for everything that we'd like to have done. We have said so often and of late, that the problems that confront us in our cities, in our colleges, in our communities; wherever they are that these problems are too big for any one group and that is basically true. Whatever it may be today, we know we have to harness together public and private resources. We know that. When we try to wage war on poverty, as we say, we call upon the voluntary agencies; when we seek for jobs for those that are disadvantaged we don't just rely on government programs -- we go to a corporate industry. Whatever it is we tie in and that's the way we should because that brings all of our strength to bear the public sector and the private sector. Gentlemen, your effort here tonight relates to that part of the partnership called the private sector. Where you're putting up the resources to be able to do the job that needs to be done for hundreds of thousands of your fellow citizens, and hundreds of thousands of people not only here, at home, but abroad. And is that American? Is that the way it ought to be? I say it is American as apple pie. This country has been sharing on its public policy, of its resources with the needed here at home and abroad. That's what this country is all about; that is what it ought to be about,

service, to humanity. And that is what you're doing here in your combined appeal; Service, for schools, for education, for housing, for youth, for veterans, for old people, for the young people; every dollar that you're going to give tonight, is an investment in life. You're not buying one gun, you're not paying for one bullet, you are giving and sharing so people might live. Yours is the work of peace. Now sometimes people say well, is there no end to it? We have been doing day after day, year after year. The taxpayers say so and your taxpayers, and you're taxed, and you also share and give in your charity and philanthropies. Is there no end to it? Well, it reminds me of a story that you've heard frequently, I'm sure, but it is always good to kind of touch you up just once again. I can't say that there's an end to it; there is so much work yet to be done. Most of everything that we have done thus far is but a beginning. One can't predict always the outcome, but you have to continue. It's like that dear, little, old lady in the time of World War II that came in and confronted Prime Minister Churchill about his drinking habits. He could consume rather copious quantities of scotch whiskey, during in which those days was not being exported too much. And this little lady, leading the temperance movement (representing that group) said, "Mr. Prime Minister, we are very, very much upset about your drinking habits, and we don't think you set a very good example for our youth, and for our nation." She said, "Our group has made a scientific calculation, that if all of the whiskey that you have consumed during your years of public life were poured into this room, it would come up to here. What do you have to say about that, Mr. Prime Minister?" And he looked at this dear, sweet lady and he looked down at the floor, and he looked up to where she held her hand, and he said, "Up to there, is that right?" And she said yes, up to there. Then he looked up to the ceiling and he said, "So little have I done, so much is there yet to do." Now we've done a great deal, but so much is there yet to do!

Now let's take a look here on the international front again. The most dangerous area in the world today is not Southeast Asia, ~~crucial~~ ^{cruel} and pitiful and tragic as it is, the most dangerous area where the great powers confront each other head on is the Middle East. For four hundred years, the Russians, not the communists, the Russians have been trying to get into the Mediterranean and ~~their~~ ^{they are} there. Finally, with a powerful fleet, with mobility, with new aircraft carriers, with submarines; they are also there with military assistance. ~~Their~~ ^{They are} there with technicians, thousands of them that they call technicians. ~~Their~~ ^{They are} there and they have allies, and client states. They have been pouring in to the United Arab Republic, to Syria and elsewhere, hundreds of millions of dollars of military assistance -- the most sophisticated weaponry that the world knows; every conceivable kind of plane, the best in supersonic jets that they can produce, tanks, mortars, rockets, whatever is required for military power has been put there by the Soviet Union in the hands of people that are determined, and have said repeatedly, to wipe Israel off the face of the earth. The Israelis understand their predicament. Israel must live; they have no other choice, survive or perish, sink or swim -- that's what it is for them. They have had to live that way for a long time, not because they wanted to, but because there's been a constant state of belligerency in that area directed against the state of Israel for over twenty years. The amazing thing ^{is} that the country, that little country, has even survived at all. It has brought into its ~~midst~~ ^{midst} over two million refugees, in an area mind you, that is smaller than the county where I lived in Minnesota. In an area that was a rock pile, sand, desert. They have remade the surface of the earth that is theirs. They have literally changed the climate through their programs of ~~forest~~ ^{forestation} and conservation. They have conserved the water, they have breathed new life into old people and little children. They have given people a

chance. When much of the world was rejecting the refugee, Israel was accepting them. We hear much about the refugee today. Let me remind you that almost three fourths of the entire population of the state of Israel: refugees, and not all refugees^{that} came with great education, not refugees that came with great skills. Many of them coming from Arabic cultures, from North Africa and other places. Primitive people, and they've been trained, educated, given health care, housing, a sense of pride, a sense of community, a sense of belonging, and today they stand proud in their new state. In their new feeling of being a community and a family of men and women. We have a stake in the Middle East. I wonder if you realize that it may very well be that Israel is in a very real sense, fighting freedom's battle in that area. Israel is not asking for one of your sons. The Prime Minister didn't ask your President or your Congress or the ~~A~~merican people for one man or woman in uniform. She didn't ask for one technician, she didn't ask for the gift of one gun, she didn't ask for anything except the right to live for her people. The right to purchase, if you please, in modest amounts the instruments of self defense. And she pledged publicly and privately, the willingness of her government to sit down tonight, any date, in open or secret negotiations with the members, with the leaders of the Arab states, to settle their differences, to arrive at frontiers and borders that were mutually acceptable, and to call off for once and for all, this state of beligerency; this crazy scene of hostility, so that the great area of the Middle East which is rich in potentialities, could start to blossom and live the good life that the people there so richly deserve. Now that's the policy, and yet there are those that say no! Now what did she want from us, what does Israel want from us? I've told you what she didn't ask for. I've told you what her leaders didn't ask for, and this is rather significant in a day when most people have come to see us either want large government loans and they have asked for no government loan from the United States. Or when leaders

come to see us and ask for large amounts of assistance on a grant basis --they've asked for none of that. When some people come to us and say that we expect to have your troops there five years, ten years, twenty years, we think you ought to have military installations there -- none of those requests have been made, my fellow Americans, not one! I'll tell you what Israel wants from us. She wants to know if we care: that is the first thing, just if we care; that we understand her plight, that we carry the message of these people to other Americans. You know, I can talk to you, and you have heard all of this most of it before, and you say, yes. But what are you doing about it?

Let me tell you that in the United States of America, there is a flood tide of pro~~pa~~ganda that makes it appear as if Israel is an aggressor, as if Israel is the one that starts the trouble, as if Israel was the one that violated the cease-fire. I want you to do more than just give of your resources, I want you to give of your time; I want you to give of your understanding; I want you to do more than just give of your understanding; I want you to talk to your neighbors. I want you to talk to Jew and Gentile alike; I want you to understand that in America, because of all our many concerns, that there can be a laxity of interest in this part of the world. And where if that happens, we are apt to wake up one morning when only the government of the United States has to respond in its traditional manor of response: namely with our might and our power and our fleet and our air forces. When in fact, what we are seeking to do is to avoid that very confrontation. We want no confrontation with mighty powers or any powers in the Middle East. We want peace in the Middle East! This was my message to Mr. Kosygan. And I want to say to this audience that peace in the Middle East can not be imposed by either the Soviet Union or the United States. It cannot be imposed! We can help set the climate, we can encourage the nation states in the area, but my fellow Americans, the only way

there will ever be peace in Southeast Asia, is for Israel and her neighbors in the Arab States to do what any responsible, dignified, nation state, and leaders of nation states, ought to do: and that is not to have their lawyers, so to speak, argue their case. But for the principles, to sit down in the historic pattern of diplomacy, and come to an agreement on water ways, on borders, on refugees, on a host of problems that have been plaguing that area for better than a generation. Israel needs our help. Your government needs to hear from you. I have reason to believe that our government is very friendly to the legitimate aims and aspirations of Israel and her policy. I think that the Prime minister of Israel came away from her visit with the President of the United States encouraged. But I want to remind you that the shifting tides of public opinion in this country, require your constant attention. To your ~~tides~~ Congressman and your Senators, you have no problem here in the state of Rhode Island, thank goodness: Your Senators and your ~~Congressmen~~ understand. But believe me, take nothing for granted! Israel needs to know that we not only care, but that we care enough so that there's an outpouring from the American public; and you represent that American public. Israel needs you! When anyone is in trouble, individually, family, company, state or nation, you feel that you need somebody. And I want to remind you that when you're left alone and isolated, you can ~~commit~~ ^{commit} very irrational acts. When you find yourself, however, surrounded or at least backed up by someone that understands, someone that is with you, you are indeed a much more sensible person. I know that many of you have been told and I want to tell you again, that Israel's forces are strong, alert, well-trained, high-spirited, good moral. That's right. And you all love to hear about the miracle, the victory, in the Six-Day War. It astounded the world. Gentlemen, don't just live in a spirit of ~~ecstasy~~ ^{euphoria}: don't just let that be all.

You know, they tell that story about Hannibal, ~~Genghis Khan~~ ^{Genghis Khan}, and Napoleon. They were a certain level, (I don't think it was heaven), but they were talking at one of these parking lots somewhere along the line, and Hannibal said about the Six~~th~~-Day War, "You know if I had had those Israeli tanks, I would have conquered Rome in a week." and ~~Genghis Khan~~ ^{Genghis Khan} said, "If I had had that Israel air force and those pilots, I would have conquered the world." And Napoleon said, "If I had radio~~ed~~ Cairo, they'd never ha~~de~~known I'd lost the battle of Waterloo." I like to hear that story myself, but I'll tell you what I'd like to tell you about it. I heard tonight how well you did in the emergency of the Sixt~~h~~-Day War. Gentlemen, there is every bit of an emergency now while the Sixt~~h~~-Day War has never been over. The major struggle is over. Have you looked at the casualty list? Have you seen the number that Israel ~~loses~~ ^{loses} each week? Have you seen what she has to do to protect her villages and her frontiers? Have you any answer how to cope with ~~guerrilla~~ ^{guerrilla} warfare? I've heard people very critical at times of Israel taking what seems to be a very sharp conterattack, when there is ~~guerrilla~~ ^{guerrilla} activity from those that move in on villages and cities, and shopping centers, and airports and what have you. My answer to them is, "If you're so smart what would you do? What kind of a government would it be that didn't seek to punish those that killed its people? What kind of a government do you think a country would have or what kind of respect would that government have from its people if it didn't strike back?" But the government of Israel knows that this is not enough: its cause is peace. So tonight I come to you asking for your help. I was asked by the Governor and Mr. Riesman, and by Mr. ~~Alperin~~ ^{Alperin} and others, and I think I even overheard them talking about it before they mentioned it to me, and said, "Do you think he'll really mention that the folks ought to help here?" And I said to them when I overheard them, "you bet I will. I didn't

come up here just to look at the scenery, even though its very beautiful. I came here on a mission." I'm here to say that as you help in this cause, the work that you're doing at home, in your combined appeal, the gifts that you will give for service abroad: you help your country, the United States of America, you help your people, and you help a proud and free country in Israel. And I repeat to you, those of you who have a deep feeling about war and violence, that every dollar that you give is to save a life; to save the people, to help people who are desperately in need. Israel's defense budget today is so large that she must depend upon help from abroad, from people who are privileged and fortunate and rich and well off, to help take care of some of the social services for people that are coming in to her gates every day looking for a home. And the migrants and the refugees still come in. If I could prove to each of you in this room tonight; if I could somehow or other convince you that your contribution will save a life, I don't think there is any doubt, but you would just jump up with joy and say, "How can I do it?" If I could show you tonight that what you do individually will save a family, will help a sick person, will educate a child, will make it possible for someone to come from wretched areas of the world to come to a promised land. I think that you would just go out of here walking on cloud ten, saying wasn't it wonderful. What greater thing is there to do than to help someone walk stright that is crippled; Someone to come of strong body who is the victim of malnutrition; someone to find a sense of happiness when they have been lonely and forlorn; someone to feel that there is someone that cares. What greater thing is there? The happiest moments of my life, I can tell you, is when somebody comes to me and says, "Mr. Humphrey, you helped me when I was in serious trouble," and I have one of the joys of public life. It's the greatest joy. You sometimes don't even know that you've helped; and some soul will come up to you and say, "You know, I have

a job today because you made it possible," or "my daughter got into a hospital and was cared for because you made a telephone call." And often times, its someone thats elderly who just needed their little pension or their little social security: some little thing like that. My fellow Americans, you tonight, can save thousands of lives out of this community. I have seen your dollars at work: I have been to Israel. I shall return to Israel. I've been in most of the great countries of ~~the~~ this world: I'm proud of the philanthropic work that Americans do. I've seen our hospitals; I've seen our schools; I've seen our teachers at work, and I've seen what can happen when American resources are put into hands of talented and dedicated ~~and~~ people of commitments such as you see in Israel. I don't know if all of you have been there. If you haven't, I hope some day you can go; but you can really go with your goods and with your resources. You can save possibly, the life of a young Israeli soldier tonight; you can possibly at least help his mother or his father. You can possibly help open up a settlement for refugees that will be coming in from someplace in Eastern Europe, North Africa or parts of Asia. That's all I'm here about. I'm here tonight to ask my fellow Americans in this state that is known for its progressive qualities, to not only open their purses, but to open their hearts, to open their minds, to understand what it's all about. Our

Our country came into being, because there were some men that signed a document in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776, in which this sentence was to be found: "We pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." That's why we got independence. It wasn't because somebody said well, we'll give you one day a month, and we'll give you one percent of what we have, and as far as honor concern, if things don't go well, we will back out. That isn't the way we got it. John Hancock signed his name on the Declaration of Independence so big that somebody said, "Why did you do it?" "Why so big John?" And he said, "I wanted the King to

be able to see it without his specks." This is the little story that is told to every school boy and girl in our schools. Well gentlemen, the people of Israel have signed their name to a sacred covenant of their freedom and their independence of their land. They have pledged their lives and they have given thousands of them. They have nourished that dry area soil with their blood and their sweat and their tears. They have not only pledged their fortune, they have given their fortune and they have done it proudly without complaint and without supplication. They have pledged their sacred honor. When you look into that little booklet that's on your table, you will see a girl of Israel protecting her people. You will see a soldier of Israel as a ^{shepherd} ~~shepherd~~ in the field with his gun on his back, not because he wants to kill; but rather because he wants to save a country, and to protect his flock and to protect his life.

I come to the Jewish community, this great community of Rhode Island, to ask you to at least share some of the good things of your life with people who have so little. To give a little of your fortune and it will come back to you as it has time after time in ever increasing amount. There isn't a man in this room I venture to say, who has not generously given in the past for what he has more than next year to give as if he had never given at all. And I know that I don't need to ask the men in this room to pledge their sacred honor, because there is no people in the world that have been the victims of more pain, of more sacrifice, of more agony, than your ^{forebears} ~~forebears~~. And now people have a place that they can call home. It's their house, their homeland. They are fighting for it with everything at their command. They're praying to keep it, they are asking for our understanding, they are looking to us for our help. And I call upon this community and Rhode Island to do as

well as you did when you thought there was an emergency in the Six~~ty~~-
Day War. Gentlemen, that war has continued: not because Israel wanted
it, but because those that were defeated in the Six~~ty~~-Day War are
determined to somehow or another, regain the initiative. Tonight
Israel needs your help; not your blood, not your sons, but your con-
fidence, your resources, your trust, and your faith, and when you do
it, you do it for all of us.

Thank you very much.

Spoken by
the ~~H~~onorable
HUBERT H. HUMPHREY



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