

Address by The Honorable Hubert H. Humphrey, U. S. Senator
from Minnesota, before the Executive Committee, FIET
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Washington, D. C.

President Allen of FIET: Senator, Gentlemen, I will now ask James Housewright to briefly introduce Senator Humphrey.

Mr. Housewright: Thank you, Mr. President and colleagues. It is really an honor and a pleasure for me to introduce to this supreme body of FIET a man whom labor has the utmost respect for, a man who has dedicated his life to helping those that work for a living. He is a true American, former Vice President of the United States, and now the Honorable Senator from the State of Minnesota. We are really happy to have him here and it's my pleasure and honor to present Senator Humphrey to you.

Mr. Humphrey: Thank you very much. My thanks to a very dear and close friend, President Jay Housewright, and a very special greeting to the President Emeritus here, an old friend, Jim Suffridge. May I express my thanks to your International President of FIET, Mr. Allen, and to the other officers.

When I was asked to come to this gathering, I had some doubts as to what I might be able to contribute to your deliberations, but then I was informed by Mr.

Housewright that I should talk about something I knew something about, namely about the role of the American Labor Movement in American politics, the role of the American Labor Movement in legislation, in the formulation of public opinion. In other words, the role of the American Labor Movement in the political processes of this country. It was also my view that I might share some thoughts with you about our current problems in America and what the free trade union movement, the free labor movement, or the labor movement of the democratic countries can do in terms of bringing about a halt to a costly and dangerous arms race between the super powers and promoting International peace keeping or international institutions that can help assure peace in this world.

Now, I will concentrate my attention first on American politics. This is what I find most enjoyable. I have had the good fortune in my public life of support--active political support--financial support, from most of the great trade unions in the United States. I use the term trade union in the general terms of the labor movement. We have both our skilled trades as well as our industrial unions. But the labor movement of the United States has been a bulwark of strength for me politically and, more significantly, it has been the main force in American politics for social legislation. The labor movement is not identified in terms of a political party, even though

I am happy to say, as a Democrat, that most of the time we find our friends in the American labor movement supporting Democratic candidates for President, Vice President, and generally for members of Congress even though there are exceptions, because we have in American politics, much less party discipline than some of you are accustomed to. We do not have what you call the parliamentary structure. We have the Presidential system; therefore, a member of Congress--a House member or Senator--can vote as he wishes without due regard to the party platform or without regard to his party allegiance. But, in the main, we find a rather cohesive force amongst our respective parties. Democrats tend to vote a certain way and Republicans another. The labor movement has supported what I consider to be the best elements of American politics. I am speaking now subjectively from my philosophical point of view, my ideology. It has backed candidates that are looked upon in the broadest terms as liberals or progressives or as some of you might call them, social democrats, throughout the world. And we have those same forces here at work in America.

I will use my own experience as a way of explaining to you the role of labor in politics. I first ran for Mayor of a great city in our country--the city of Minneapolis--a city of half a million people. I was a very young man, unknown, but had been a member of the American Federation of Teachers of the AFL. This was before the AFL and the CIO

had joined. I was the labor-sponsored candidate. In the first election I did not win. In the second election we won an overwhelming victory. And labor-endorsed candidates for many offices were successful. In every campaign that I have been in I have had labor support. President Truman had active labor support. Adlai Stevenson. John Kennedy. Lyndon Johnson. And when I ran for the presidency in 1968 without the labor support my campaign would have been a disaster. With it, it became almost a success. The major political force in 1968 for the presidency in the Democratic Party was the organized labor movement of this country. The organized labor movement cuts across many lines. For example it was able to work very closely with representatives of our black community, of our racial minorities. And in American politics, like many other countries, we have what we call coalitions, and a successful coalition for^a/progressive, social democrat, liberal, is to have the solid support of organized labor, to have a very substantial amount of support from our ethnic minorities, particularly from blacks, from what we call the Mexican-Americans or the Chicanos, and from the Jewish community and some of the other ethnic minorities in our country. This is the solid basis. Then the academic community has, in the main, in the past, been favorable to the election of liberal, progressive candidates.

During recent years, I must confess, because of the war in Vietnam and the disenchantment on the part of our intellectual community over that war and political leaders

that made decisions about the war, we lost a good deal of support in the intellectual community. But that support did not go to the Republicans, it just didn't go anyplace. And I suppose one of the reasons for the defeat in 1968 was not only the problems that we had relating to the war but the fact that certain people as we put it, tuned out. They turned off. They just didn't vote. But our labor friends did.

Now, once the elections are over, then we get down to the process of legislation. And I have to make it very concise and brief for you. There isn't a single measure of any consequence in the Congress of the United States that moves through that Congress that relates to the health, the education, the economic well being of our people that doesn't require active, effective, continuous persevering labor support. And we have, as you know, in our labor movement what we call COPE, the Committee on Political Education. And that organization has been effective. But our respective Internationals of all the unions have their own legislative representatives that lobby on Capitol Hill, lobby in state legislatures, without our support from labor we wouldn't have had social security. Just going back in the Roosevelt years. We wouldn't be anywhere near where we are today in the field of education. We wouldn't have many of the laws that we have today in housing and relating to the development of our cities. The truth is that the

labor movement in America has a broad perspective. It doesn't just talk about collective bargaining and what we call labor-management relations, it covers every area of American life and of our world politics. It is deeply involved in international relations, trade policy, national defense, mutual security, foreign aid. The labor movement is involved totally in these matters and today the labor movement is involved in a broad scale or a broad spectrum of domestic issues. Now we get down to the immediate situation.

You have read a great deal about our country in the 1960's. Let me say a little bit about it. I have been in the middle of the battle of the 60's. The 1960's in this country have been as turbulent and as filled with disorder as any period in our history with one exception--I suppose the period of the War Between the States in the 1860's. In the 1860's the black man was given what we call emancipation. In the 1960's he got the full rights of citizenship. We are an unusual country. I don't mean to minimize the problems of other countries. But this is the only large country with a population of over 200,000,000 with a vast territorial area that has a heterogeneous population. In other words, practically every known race, creed and color finds a home someplace in this nation. Now, I have said many times that there is a serious question as to whether

or not representative institutions of government, free elections, what we call democratic politics can survive in a heterogeneous society. Because blocs build up--there is what we call polarization--not only ethnic, but economic, racial, geographical. And I am somewhat a student of politics. I am a teacher as well and I know of no great nation--and great in size I speak--and of great population, that has been able to succeed over a long period of time with what we call "free representative institutions of government" with a heterogeneous population. We are trying it. We think we can make it. And I am an optimist about it, but this is the great challenge in this country today. In the period of the 1960's, all of this contest, this conflict, between peoples, regions, groups, races, economic groups, came to a head, so that the 1960's was the period of dramatic change in America--a period of almost revolutionary change, even with violence as we have had, we've always had some violence in this country, we are somewhat a violent people. But the violence took on new proportions in the 1960's because the majority who were not violent were not quite sure where they stood. In the past, a majority was always able to subdue violence because the majority would be angry, would be determined, had a policy of its own, but in the 1960's, the little minority that committed acts of violence received an undue amount of publicity and was, in a sense, effective because the majority was split off in many ways. They didn't have any cohesive,

central position. Now this is not all bad, because in order to make changes, you have to have great flexibility, and I am not happy about the violence because it caused great suffering and hardship, but I want to say to you, as representatives of other countries and of great labor organizations, that I look upon the 1960's not only as a period of disorder and demonstrations and dissent, which are somewhat inevitable at times in democratic societies, but also of debate and constructive dialogue and a period of great discovery about ourselves and a period of monumental decision. And the last two are more important than the preceding descriptive phrases. I said, yes, disorder, dissent, demonstration, dialogue, debate--but then there was discovery. We discovered a lot about ourselves, we discovered, for example, that there were a large number of poor people in America in an affluent society, unbelievably affluent. Now, we knew there were poor, but we never knew the depth of the poverty. We never knew the intensity of it, the degree of it, and it came to the forefront. We always knew we had racial problems, but we never realized the intensity of the feeling on the part of some of our minorities. We discovered ourselves, we discovered what was happening to our young people in education, we discovered a great deal about our cities. You know America changed so rapidly after World War II that we didn't quite know what was happening, it happened so rapidly that we couldn't keep up with the changes and in the period of the 1960's, all of this came to a boiling point. We found ourselves suddenly

an urbanized society with no urban planning. Gentlemen, we are the only industrialized nation on the face of the Earth that has no plans. Now I hate to tell you that, because it is an admission of inadequacy and weakness, but the only government in the world that has no planning agency. We have no plans for the use of our resources; for the allocation of our manpower. If you were to ask the most gifted political man in America today, "What are your plans for the next ten years in education?", he couldn't tell you. "What are your plans and needs in the fields of housing and transportation?", he couldn't tell you. "How much would it take to provide good education in the year 1980--which is just around the corner?". "How many children will you have, and what will be the requirements in our higher educational system, our elementary, our secondary, our pre-school"? You are in a country today, I regret to tell you, that has not agreed upon either its goals or its priorities, nor has it any mechanism for ascertaining them. That's one of the reasons I got back into politics. I intend to get something done about this, because no country is rich enough to just squander its wealth and its talents in such a haphazardous, accidental fashion as we are doing. Part of the frustration today in America is due to the fact that no one sees the goals that we are achieving. Our young people are acting up because no one can tell them just what they are supposed to be working for. You can't just get by with saying we are working for freedom. Freedom from what?

Freedom for what? After all, Franklin Roosevelt gave us the freedom--freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom from disease, and so on. We had some goals. But no one articulates those goals today. One of the great mistakes of our present politics in America, or one of the shortcomings is that from the highest of this land there is no stated purpose for America. And even if you state it, no one can tell you how to achieve it or what it is going to cost, or how long it will take. What is the blueprint? So, we are, in many ways, in a sad state. Yet, we have everything to do with. We have good management, good labor; we have good tools; we have high skills; we have almost unlimited capital. You see, I was originally a pharmacist and it doesn't do any good to have all of the chemicals if you don't know how to put them together in a compound for the purpose of curing a disease. We are like the pharmacy, or the chemical shop, that has all of the ingredients--and even has the skilled professional talent--but we haven't either identified the disease or put together the compound to correct it. Now the labor movement is trying to teach us that we have to do something about this. That's why I have such a close affiliation here and I think we can do it. Take, for example, the labor movement today in our country is promoting national health insurance. Now most of you gentlemen come from countries that have a comprehensive health program of some kind, but we spend more money per person on health care in this country than any of you could ever dream of. Our health

bill last year was 70 billion dollars, and yet, we had 40 million people in this country that had no health insurance of any kind. We have no real preventive health care. You've got to get sick--and very sick--to get the benefit of health insurance in this country. So, the labor movement, in conjunction with a number of Senators and Congressmen, is today promoting a National Health Insurance Program, where we will pay for health care like we pay for Social Security. We will get some help out of the general treasury as well. Where we will have to train many more doctors, for example. We need fifty thousand more doctors today in America. Many areas of America today are without doctors. We have lots of doctors in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, but very few doctors in the rural areas of the state where I come from. We have provided, at long last, Medicare; that is, health insurance for our elderly. I was the original sponsor of that legislation, gentlemen, and it took sixteen years to get it. In fact, I sponsored that bill on the 17th day of May, 1949. And it wasn't until 1965 that it became law. And it was called socialism and every conceivable name. You would think that a country that says it loves children, like we say we do, would have a health care program for children. Now let me say this for the benefit of my own fellow Americans, we give our children less health care than any modern Western industrial nation in the world. They get a lot of health care when they are born--if you are middle income, white, and live in a metropolitan area. But, if you are black, or poor white, living in a rural area, you

get very little. But the important thing is that, from age one to age ten, the critical years--or you could put it up to age twelve--very limited health care; very limited dental care. Now I happen to believe that the prestige of my country ought to be judged, not whether we can build a great airplane or produce a great weapon. We may need those, but I think the prestige of this country ought to be rated by what we do about people. And a healthy people makes for a healthy economy. We are going to push until we get a health care program in this country. Now, 21 years ago, I joined with a Senator by the name of James Murray from Montana and sponsored National Health Insurance. A Congressman from Michigan by the name of Hingle, whose son now serves in the House of Representatives, was the other sponsor. You wouldn't believe what they said about our proposal....we were Communists, we were Socialists. But, today I can tell you that health insurance has a general acceptance across the American economy. Even the President of the United States has now admitted that there is a health crisis. We are going to pass health insurance. Maybe not this year, but we will start it this year and get it next year, or this year. Now the same thing is true with a number of other fields and the labor movement is in there every day lecturing, lobbying, urging, publishing information, developing statements, publicising its membership through its papers, bulletins. This is the way we get things done. Now I want to conclude this part of the domestic picture when I referred to the 1960's. What the 60's did was to compel us to look at ourselves and come up with some answers.

And we did come up with a number of answers. The thing I know about politics--you never get final solutions in your time. You get beginnings. This was true of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, the great period of the 30's. And we got some beginnings. We declared war on poverty. We are going to do something about that. We are going to do something about what we call income maintenance for our poor. Family allowances. We are going to totally remodel our welfare system at long last. And it will be much better. We are now recognizing that if there aren't jobs in the private sector, you have to provide them in the public sector. Unemployment is unacceptable as a matter of national economic or political policies. And this is one of the issues today that will change the politics of America. The economic issue, the health issue, the education issue, the issue of race, race relations--these are the grave moving political issues in America today. And, in every one of these, the labor movement is right in the center. And I am happy to say I am a part of it. I think we have to make dramatic changes in American social institutions. We have to make our cities livable. I want to say to Jay here--Jay Housewright--and to Jim and others, that the other night I was visiting with a very eminent scholar of European extraction--France--

and he pointed out to me that our cities are not overcrowded compared to your cities. The density of population in New York is not nearly as dense as London, or as Amsterdam, or as other great cities--or Rome and other great cities in Europe. But your cities are better planned--more open space--and the problem that we have is not that there are too many people in the cities, but the relationship of the man to the space in which he lives is wrong. And the social services are inadequate. We are in a country where we are privately rich and publicly poor. Now that is the key to the problems of America and to its strength. We have great private wealth, massive wealth, tremendous economy. It is faltering now, but it's ready to go if somebody will give it a little leadership. All the resources are here, but our problem is that we have let our public facilities run down. We've been building huge office buildings and clubs and private homes and we've got magnificent places to live for some of our people, but the public services have begun to deteriorate. For example, most of the countries that you represent have municipal housing or some form of subsidized housing. We have to have it in America. But our public housing is a disgrace. And totally inadequate. Our public transportation is unbelievably antiquated. As a matter of fact, they now prove that you could have gone across the city of New York 50 years ago on horseback

faster than you could go now by automobile, we could move the mail by stagecoach through a metropolitan area more rapidly than you can move it now by truck--because our public transportation is totally out of joint. Imagine this city just now contemplating the subways--the capital of the United States. The whole structure of our sanitary services--unbelievably out of date, inadequate to the population. Our community facilities--the parks, playgrounds, campsites--totally inadequate. We pride ourselves on saying we have these vast open spaces in the mountains, but lots of people can't get to the mountains. You need to have your parks and campsites, your little forest and tree areas, in the cities near at hand. The one way that we can make the principle of egalitarianism, or of equality, meaningful in this country is to see to it that there are certain minimal, essential services provided for every person. In other words, he ought to be able to get the bus; he ought to be able to get on the subway, and he ought to be able to move quickly, at reasonable cost at any time of the day, whether he is rich or poor, black or white, old or young. We've got to be able to provide decent homes for everybody. We have to be able to provide a high quality of education not only for the upper middle income and high income, but, in fact, one way to equalize opportunities in this country is for those that have less to see that they have more in public facilities. Franklin Roosevelt used to

say that the duty of government is not to see to it that those who already have too much have more, but rather to see that those who have too little have enough. Now this is where our job is. It is to lift that, what we call the basic structure of America so that the floor under everybody is a little higher. That doesn't mean that you put a ceiling on anybody, but you get your services and your public facilities up a little further.

Now let me kind of round this off. I may have taken more time here today than I should. I don't know what you had in mind. But one of the things our labor movement is concerned about is of course jobs, the relationship of exports and imports to jobs, the multinational corporation, and I have asked for a study by the way, Jay, in the Congress in what we call the joint committee on the economic report, on what we call the multinational corporation. We are having a large number of American businesses that are exporting their capital to other countries, bringing in goods under an American label into our markets in large quantities, taking jobs of a large number of our workers. Now I happen to believe in a generous trade policy. I am not only a liberal in terms of our domestic policies, but I believe we can liberalize trade. But also I am a realist. And we cannot afford to have our workers without jobs in the name of some kind of philosophy trade policy. By the same token

we can't afford to enter into a trade war where other countries retaliate, because you take action without consultation. But we have seen, for example, in the textile field, large importations of textile products that have taken jobs by the thousands from some of our people in this country that desperately need those jobs. The textile industry, for example, hires more blacks that are semi-skilled or unskilled than most any industry. So that when those jobs are lost we not only lose jobs but we lose jobs for a particular group of people. Now actually the investors lose nothing because they just take their money and put it someplace else. But the worker loses something. I have to say with equal candor that it is important that our workers be productive. I think we have to take a hard look at the facts and if productivity is down then inevitably exports or imports are going to be up. Because productivity is one of the ways we control inflation. We are having our problems with inflation. One of the problems we have with the government about inflation--it only looks at the wage area on inflation. It doesn't look at the rent on money, called interest. It doesn't look at the pricing practices on the part of industry, seldom. The only thing that is visible in our newspapers day after day, after day, is when a worker or a union asks for a pay increase. But the automobile industry will

give you two or three price increases during the year to get the price of that Ford or Chevrolet or Buick or whatever car it is up a hundred, a hundred fifty dollars, before there is any negotiations, and nobody hardly even notices it is happening except that it is listed as a new price on a car. But when a worker comes in or a union comes in and asks for a 30¢ an hour wage increase, or generally what they ask for is something like this: 45¢ an hour, but then you read in fine print it is over the next three years. And the simple economic fact is, and I am somewhat of an economist and I can prove this statistically, that the workers never get ahead of inflated prices. You may temporarily, in a three-year contract, get a better deal the first year, but by the end of the third year you are running behind. In other words, wages always run behind prices over the long term of the contract. This is why many of the contracts have reopeners as you know. By the way our labor movement, well the government in America has much less to do about prices and wages than it does in many of your countries. We have to rely a great deal on what we call collective bargaining--as you do of course. But collective bargaining is at the very heart of our economic system and one of the battles that the labor movement has in America is to keep the public with it, because the overall public is constantly led to believe that the people that gouge the economy, the people that take the big hunk out of the economy is the labor movement. Now, of course, I

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seen very few workers that have a yacht and spend two months in the Caribbean or in the Mediterranean. As I tell my friends, we try to get it so that our workers can have two weeks vacation in a rowboat on a lake in Minnesota. In other words, just ordinary living conditions. But our job is a constant battle in this country of explaining the role of wages in the price structure, the role of the worker and his working conditions in the economic picture. Because the worker in America doesn't have a national newspaper, which I think is unfortunate. May I say to my fellow Americans, there is no national TV program except you have, thank God, the Retail Clerks have had a good TV show and radio show. But we don't have the kind of public relations, regrettably, from the great labor movement in this nation that tells the story of the worker to other people other than union members. In other words, that man preaching in church on Sunday has read the local newspaper, and that paper may have a very strong bias, prejudice against the working man. We do not have a national publication or a national communication network for the voice of labor. Nor do we have it for the voice of political party, except the one that's in power. We are struggling to find a way to do something about that.

Well, I think that's about enough. Maybe some of you would like to ask some questions and if you would I am happy to try to answer them. Thank you.

(Applause)

President Allen: Senator, may I say on behalf of the Executive Body and the observers with us--this has been for me and I am sure I speak for the Executive, both a privilege and a pleasure to have you come to address us in such a splendid and forthright manner and to touch on many of the problems which confront your country, as I am sure, in miniature, they confront many other countries too. Many of us have followed your political career, if I may say so, with close interest and I count myself amongst that following. Particularly, in the events leading up to 1968. Many of us, I am sure, were very very surprised and sorry, as I was, that the contest was not won by yourself. But since I've been in America I have been reading the American press and watching very closely the American television. I understand the ring is already being erected for the next fight. I hope and, I am sure after listening to your description of the turbulent issues confronting your country, that you will be in the ring as one of the principal contestants; and I hope that next time you will be the successful candidate, if that transpires. I am sure that, too, would be the wish of many of our people who have listened to you this morning. May I say very quickly, and I know this would have registered with many other members of the Executive here, the zeal with which you describe the economic and social problems confronting your country does for me and, I am sure many of us, touch the imagination of people today and this is really what is needed.

If the political leaders of the world--I suppose I can say this as a visitor--need in the future or hope in the future to capture the imagination of the people and not as our right to be taken by those who might have ulterior motives for doing it, it seems that one will need the qualities and the caliber of gentlemen like yourself to lead in the high stations and levels of this nation and indeed the world. There are problems in America. We know as an international trade union there are problems all over the world--the problem of raging inflation, the problems of the underemployed, the problem of the aged, the sick and the handicapped, the need of the family--all of these are issues which concern us as an international, as I am sure they concern you as politicians. Now I don't want personally to take any more time, although I would very much have liked to have done so, because we have had in my view a most challenging address in the best part of the last hour and time is running out on us. My agenda suggests we should have left here already, and it leaves me, on behalf of the International to say how grateful we are for your visit; how much we appreciate what you have had to say and to wish you every success in your future battles on behalf of the American people. Thank you very much.



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