REMARKS BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

DINNER HONORING BEN FIXMAN

St. Louis, Missouri

October 31, 1971

I have come here tonight to honor one of St. Louis' great civic leaders. In his capacity as a leading industrialist and citizen, Ben Fixman has well earned the National Human Relations Award that he has been graced with this evening. I personally view this award with much respect because it represents a crowning effort on the part of a single individual to generate the kind of civil responsibility which can make this country pulsate with vitality and a keen sense of human

justice.

What disturbs me is that there is not enough of this kind of personal commitment nationwide. It would be most pleasurable for me to give an address listing the accomplishments of Ben Fixman and many of you people here who have provided the solid base of support for all that the splendid Gateway Arch of St. Louis signifies. But I share the kind of responsibility which Mr. Fixman stands for, and it is this sense of civic consciousness that motivates me to discuss what I think are some crucial questions facing our society today -- questions which the work of the American Jewish Committee and B'nai B'rith has concentrated its activities on for so long and so well.

For me I find that an American citizen should have at least three levels of concern in his relations with other human

beings.

He should be concerned with the welfare of those people affecting him the most -- his family, friends, and the city in

which he lives. But is he?

He should be concerned with the future of his country --

the human progress of American society. But is he?

He should be concerned as a citizen of the world with humanity in general -- the social and economic condition of human beings everywhere. But is he?

There was a time when my answers to all these questions would have been in the affirmative. I thought that every city, and every country was blessed with Ben Fixmans. I still think they are. But now I am less certain that there are enough of them to go around. I am less convinced that our own government or any contemporary government has taken full advantage of them.

Perhaps, in our race for technological gains, we have forgotten what society is all about. Where is the human element in our

civilization? Where is the voluntary participation that spurred us on to reach great heights in our economic growth and human

development?

I am not the only one asking these questions. In a Gallup poll undertaken for a comparative study on American public opinion by the International Institute for Social Research, a cross-section of the American public all expressed a new and urgent concern over where our country, our society was going. It was found that there was a pervasive sense of national regression: that the nation was disunited and its institutions were unresponsive to the needs of people. The study concludes, and I quote, "Americans sense that their country has lost rather than gained ground over the past five years." The recurrent explanation? -- "Our traditional way of doing things is not working and some basic changes are needed if we are to work together.

From the national to the personal, the contrast is enormous. In terms of the scale of satisfaction of each individual, the study's results are more positive. As individuals, we apparently find great satisfaction in our personal well-being.

So what are we to conclude? We see an alienation from our government, we see elements of despair and almost a state of human complacency. Does that mean that the need for government -- the need to provide and the need to protect -- is no longer there? Does that mean that our population has forgotted

no longer there? Does that mean that our population has forgotten its identity with all human beings? Have we turned insular and cynical? Has our spirit been sapped and our commitment ended?

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Now I have to hesitate before I answer. There is definitely an American malaise rooted in the disparity between ideals and reality. There is talk about the masses and neglect of the people; job opportunity and unemployment, wealth and human poverty, justice and social inequalities, economic development and the dwindling of foreign economic assistance.

The more we go into the details, the murkier the picture

becomes.

Our economy is lagging and unemployment hovers about the 6% mark. Discriminatory practices against racial and ethnic groups still denies many Americans equal opportunities for self-development. Our government on the federal and local levels has not yet responded imaginatively to the urgent needs. Where are the programs for hunger, poverty, unemployment, health, poor housing, and inadequate education? We have a burgeoning defense budget, and a spiralling arms race. Peace is still not in our clutches, not when there is Vietnam, Pakistan and the Middle East.

To possess the goal of peace does not produce its realization anymore than the ideal of justice and freedom brings its instantaneous accomplishment. The Middle East is a case in point. Here is an example of the human dilemma: the seemingly insurmountable gap between the idea and reality. Israel's requests are modest -- a right to live in peace -- certainly, a reasonable goal for any nation. Because of misinterpretation, a lack of understanding, and intolerance, that goal has so far proved illusory. Israel has been fighting for its life -- its right to live and to secure a system of democracy for its own society. Unreasonable? Other nations once thought so.

Now the problem is to rid them of certain suspicions which obstruct any inclination they might have to negotiate. Herein lies a great opportunity to resolve a most serious conflict threatening the safety and security of the world. Until tension is reduced, the Middle East will remain a powder keg with a very short fuse, ready to explode if any one of the participants strikes the match of revived hostility. While the Middle East conflict began as a confrontation between the Arab countries and Israel, it now threatens to spark a confrontation between the two powerful nuclear Goliaths of the earth, the United States and the Soviet Union.

For the myth of peace to become a reality, the United States can be of great assistance. We can assure that Israel is equipped with the defensive capabilities necessary to deter against any attack. A balance of power in that part of the world provides the kind of stability which is ultimately conducive to reaching a negotiated settlement. Our government should keep this fact in mind before it refuses or delays any longer on Israel's request for Phantom jets. I have urged the Administration to take this small step and am disturbed at its failure to do so. This intransigence is not merely a question of being unresponsive. It is a sign of mistaken perceptions. But perceptions hopefully change and happily, so do administrations.

I mentioned justice and freedom, but what does it mean when persecution of a religious minority is on the rise in the Soviet Union and when we at home still face the task that has been ours for almost two centuries -- the task of securing full rights of citizenship and human dignity for all races.

In the Soviet Union today there is an organized effort to suppress an entire Jewish community. The systematic assault on their dignity and their freedom is not a problem for Russian Jews alone -- nor a problem only for Jews.

This is not one of those matters of the internal affairs of a nation, affairs in which others should not interfere. It is a situation in which the United States should use official channels in an attempt to curb the persecution, and permit the right of Soviet Jewry to emigrate to any land. It is an example of the kind of human bond I have been talking about, hoping for, and seeking my entire life to secure.

It is certainly plausible that our country and individual Americans can do a great deal to pressure Soviet leaders. I myself am doing what I can through legislation in the Senate, but more can be done. This government of ours and the American people should speak up for freedom wherever freedom does not exist. We should speak up for human dignity wherever people are victims of indignity and of humilitation. We should be doing all we can to disarm the world of its prejudice and bigotry as well as its weapons. This kind of disarmament needs to take place in America just as it does in the Soviet Union.

I said that I am more hesitant to give answers to the

questions I asked myself and yourselves. But I still say, yes, yes, yes. Except now there is some anxiety in my voice. I do not think enough effort is being made to restore the spirit, and the commitment to life and what our own government can offer, given the proper inspiration. We have to think about Man to be

We can close the gap between myth and reality. We can reshape the reality to restore the faith in our institutions. All this can be done and more, but the essential ingredient is leadership. That is what we need.

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000285 LAGGING AND UNEMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES AGAINST RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS STILL DENIES MANY AMERICANS EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR SELF-DEVELOPMENT GOVERNMENT ON THE FEDERAL AND LOCAL LEVELS HAS NOT YET RESPONDED IMAGINATIVELY TO THE URGENT NEEDS WHERE ARE THE PROGRAMS UNEMPLOYMENT, HEALTH, POOR HOUSING, AND SPIRALLING ARMS RACE / PEACE IS STILL NOT IN OUR CLUTCHES, NOT WHEN THERE IS VIETNAM, PAKISTAN AND THE MIDDLE EAST.

The subject of one in and the U.H. Ras again to The entire legislative history of foreign aid is has shown that is has always been difficult to get passage of these measures, / This problem becomes acute in times of domestic economic difficulty and recession. When the Congress is concerned with the lack of jobs and rising inflation home, the passage of a foreign aid bill requires the delicate and totall cooperation between the Executive branch and the legislative leadership Yet, what has been the case in this instance? / We find the President maintaining Little of no contact with the Congressional leadership for over even weeks prior to action on the bill. Then, when the Administration did give a nod to the Congress regarding the foreign aid bill it was a "scruff of the neck, back of the hand" approach wherein the President held up to the Senate the threat of a veto if the bill should contain any amendments which he did not want. This coupled with the President's intemperate remarks following the ouster 00 of Nationalist China from the UN funte fuel on the fires of neo-isolationism g that lumns deep in the ultra conservative element not only in the Cons through the come of The President's threats to those liberal members of the Senate who wished to assure no further expansion of our war efforts in Indo China Condess with his 'con light' against the United Nations to defeat this foreign aid bill The President is guilty of the worst kind of legislative arrogance in this matter. Now ... after weeks of hearing and debate. Now ... after the vote has been taken and he has suffered another major legislative defeat, the President resorts to his familiar stance of castigating the Congress for what is, in effect, the total absence of necessary posture and leadership from the Office of the President.

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