

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

SENATE YOUTH PROGRAM LUNCHEON

Washington, D.C.

February 6, 1976

If there is one thing that can be said about the society in which you are taking your places as young adults and as citizens, it is that it is changing very rapidly.

In the last decade or so, new roles have been opening up for young people, for women, and for minorities. New ideas are shattering the old myths and stereotypes that held people back or kept them down. New talents have been liberated to enrich our national life.

This great movement of change has had a profound impact on our system of politics and government.

It has brought about reform in our political parties, reforms in the Congress, and limits on the powers of the President.

It has inspired millions of citizens to involve themselves in the great social issues of our time -- civil rights, poverty, hunger, the environment, and the energy crisis.

Politicians have changed, too.

The old cigar-smoking city bosses and ward heelers who divided up the spoils behind closed doors are nearly extinct. In their place there are people who have earned their positions of leadership in the struggle to set new goals for America in the 70's and beyond.

Of course, not all change is for the better.

Too much and too rapid change has made Americans afraid for their futures and for the future of their country.

It has shaken Americans' faith in our economy and in our ideal of economic opportunity for all.

It has made Americans distrustful of politicians and government at all levels -- because sometimes they are corrupt; because they fail to provide badly-needed leadership; because they make big promises and then fail to deliver; and because the average citizen often seems to have no control over governmental actions and decisions.

Our society is in the midst of a very painful readjustment. We are learning that our affluence and our national resources are not limitless.

After 30 years of almost uninterrupted prosperity, we suddenly are faced with the grim reality of hunger at home and starvation abroad. We are increasingly dependent for energy and other basic raw materials on poorer nations that are jealous of our wealth and suspicious of our motives.

We no longer have the power to solve every international crisis and enforce our will around the world by diplomacy or military might.

We are threatened within by crime and by the fear that crime breeds, by the relaxation of moral and ethical standards, and by the flight from responsibility that causes people to drop out, run away from their problems, or seek refuge in drugs and alcohol.

We must face the fact that the 24 years remaining in this century -- the years in which your generation will play the leading role -- may be decisive in the future of this Nation. Sometime in the next quarter-century we probably will learn whether we will survive as a strong, free Nation, and as a people.

That is the long perspective. But even in the short run our problems are severe. We must find a way out of this recession that has put millions of Americans out of work and caused untold hardship for the poor and those on fixed incomes.

We must conserve our energy supplies in order to reduce our dependence on foreign oil imports.

We must mobilize both private and public resources to feed the hungry, clothe the needy, clean up our cities, and make adequate housing, health care, job training, educational opportunities, and public transportation available for all our citizens.

I am an optimist by nature. I believe that we can do all of these things. But those of us in public life, in politics and government, cannot do it alone. We need your help. We need the active commitment and participation of every American citizen -- young and old, rich and poor, black and white, men and women.

Meeting the challenges we face as a Nation, achieving the goals we set for ourselves as a society -- the name of the game is politics. Dirty word though it has become to some people, politics is the way we get things done in our system.

It is the life-blood of our representative democracy.

It is the vehicle of change, bringing forth new ideas, new concepts of government, and new leaders.

It is the means by which conflicts and competing interests of different races, religions, regions, generations, and cultural life-styles can be resolved peacefully.

It enables us to choose for our leaders individuals who will represent and protect our rights and interests, and to remove them when they fail to do so.

Every citizen can participate. Every citizen must participate in order for self-government to work properly.

And yet, at a time when citizen involvement in politics and government is needed more than ever before, there has been a dangerous decline of public confidence in government and the political process.

Disenchantment with our political system should not be overstated, however. There is hope and a solid basis for reform.

I see no mass rejection of the Congress or the office of the Presidency. Nor do I see people grasping for extreme solutions.

Underneath it all, I think most people believe in the ultimate ability of America to resolve its problems and to continue to progress. They have faith in our political system. People continue to think that the government, with the right leaders, can be made to work effectively and that even our most intractable problems like inflation and unemployment and energy shortages will yield to creative and energetic leadership.

I am here to tell you that that leadership must come from you.

We desperately need the compassion and idealism of youth in public life.

We need your energy and your enthusiasm.

We welcome the participation of students and other young people who take seriously the responsibility of being citizens in a free society and want to do something about it.

Be true to yourself, listen to your conscience, and then wade in and seek a meaningful experience in practical, real politics. If you think politics is dirty, then let me remind you of the old axiom of political science: People get the kind of government they deserve. The corollary of that rule is that people generally get the kind of politicians they deserve.

If you think politics is dirty, then get in there and work to clean it up.

If you think politicians are corrupt and unresponsive to the great needs of this Nation, then seek out and support new leaders. Elect them to office, or run for office yourselves.

If you think government is overloaded with stale ideas and ineffective programs, bring us your fresh ideas, your social conscience, your visions for America's future.

Tell us what must be done and keep after us until it gets done. Get involved and help us do the job.

This is not simple rhetoric. 1976 is a presidential election year. In November we will be choosing a President who, for the next four years, will be directing this Nation's response to critical problems such as unemployment, inflation, environmental pollution, and all the various aspects of the energy crisis.

The Republican candidates, President Ford and Mr. Reagan, will run on a platform of dismantling or drastically cutting Federal programs for the poor and helpless in our society.

They would have us "liberate" consumers from the Federal protections that keep our work places safe and healthy, our food pure and unadulterated, our drugs safe and effective, our air and water unpolluted.

They are perfectly satisfied with a seven percent or higher national unemployment rate for at least the next two years and evidently consider it better to put people on welfare than to put people back to work.

In his budget for fiscal year 1977, the President proposes heavy cuts in all social programs -- programs that represent this Nation's commitment to make the American dream a reality for all Americans, not just for the privileged few.

My party, the Democratic Party, rejects that philosophy. The Federal Government is not an independent entity. It belongs to the people. It exists to serve them. It accomplishes things which would not be accomplished in any other way.

And if it sometimes seems remote or uncaring -- if it does not always serve the people as well and effectively as it could or should, our system provides for orderly change. The people can make their government accountable and effective, if only they care enough to get involved and do something about it. If they "just aren't interested" enough even to vote, they hardly can complain when things don't go exactly to their liking.

I urge you to involve yourselves in the national debate on these conflicting philosophies of government in this election year. I especially urge you to keep in touch with what is going on in Congress, because that is where the issues will be defined most clearly. The outcome will be expressed in legislation that will affect each of you directly and individually.

Moreover, I hope that many of you will be involved in an active way in the upcoming primaries and election campaigns. Find candidates that you can believe in. Work for them. Discover for yourselves the heartaches and the rewards that come from seeking public office.

I've been through a lot of elections, but every one is a new experience. I meet wonderful people and I find new inspiration in their plans and hopes and dreams for America. It is a learning experience which cannot be obtained in any other way.

I urge you young people, especially, to get involved in politics. Women in politics today are winning tremendous respect from their male colleagues for their integrity, ability and dedication. They are making politics more humane, more concerned with the quality of life, with the problems of the poor, the sick, the hungry, the elderly.

We cannot afford to waste any talents in our efforts to create a more just, humane, and democratic society. The problems we face as a Nation today will require the best efforts of all citizens, men and women, rich and poor, young and old, if we are to find solutions. I urge you to pledge yourselves personally to that cause in this year of our Nation's bicentennial anniversary.

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✓ IF THERE IS ONE THING THAT CAN BE SAID ABOUT THE SOCIETY IN WHICH YOU ARE TAKING YOUR PLACES AS YOUNG ADULTS AND AS CITIZENS, IT IS THAT IT IS CHANGING VERY RAPIDLY.

IN THE LAST DECADE OR SO, NEW ROLES HAVE BEEN OPENING UP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, FOR WOMEN, AND FOR MINORITIES. ✓ NEW IDEAS ARE SHATTERING THE OLD MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES THAT HELD PEOPLE BACK OR KEPT THEM DOWN. ✓ NEW TALENTS HAVE BEEN LIBERATED TO ENRICH OUR NATIONAL LIFE.

✓ THIS GREAT MOVEMENT OF CHANGE HAS HAD A PROFOUND IMPACT ON OUR SYSTEM OF POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT.

✓ IT HAS BROUGHT ABOUT REFORM IN OUR POLITICAL PARTIES, REFORMS IN THE CONGRESS, AND LIMITS ON THE POWERS OF THE PRESIDENT.

L IT HAS INSPIRED MILLIONS OF CITIZENS TO INVOLVE THEMSELVES
IN THE GREAT SOCIAL ISSUES OF OUR TIME -- CIVIL RIGHTS, POVERTY,
HUNGER, THE ENVIRONMENT, AND THE ENERGY CRISIS.

L POLITICANS HAVE CHANGED, TOO.

L THE OLD CIGAR-SMOKING CITY BOSSES AND WARD HEELERS WHO DIVIDED
UP THE SPOILS BEHIND CLOSED DOORS ARE NEARLY EXTINCT. L IN THEIR
PLACE THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO HAVE EARNED THEIR POSITIONS OF
LEADERSHIP IN THE STRUGGLE TO SET NEW GOALS FOR AMERICA IN THE
70's AND BEYOND.

Change

L OF COURSE, NOT ALL CHANGE IS FOR THE BETTER.

L TOO MUCH AND TOO RAPID CHANGE HAS MADE AMERICANS AFRAID FOR
THEIR FUTURES AND FOR THE FUTURE OF THEIR COUNTRY.

L IT HAS SHAKEN AMERICANS' FAITH IN OUR ECONOMY AND IN OUR
IDEAL OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL. / *manipulation*

IT HAS MADE AMERICANS DISTRUSTFUL OF POLITICIANS AND GOVERNMENT
AT ALL LEVELS -- BECAUSE SOMETIMES THEY ARE CORRUPT; BECAUSE THEY
FAIL TO PROVIDE BADLY-NEEDED LEADERSHIP; BECAUSE THEY MAKE BIG
PROMISES AND THEN FAIL TO DELIVER; AND BECAUSE THE AVERAGE CITIZEN
OFTEN SEEMS TO HAVE NO CONTROL OVER GOVERNMENTAL ACTIONS AND
DECISIONS.

OUR SOCIETY IS IN THE MIDST OF A VERY PAINFUL READJUSTMENT.

WE ARE LEARNING THAT OUR AFFLUENCE AND OUR NATIONAL RESOURCES
ARE NOT LIMITLESS.

4 AFTER 30 YEARS OF ALMOST UNINTERRUPTED PROSPERITY, WE SUDDENLY
ARE FACED WITH THE GRIM REALITY OF HUNGER AT HOME AND STARVATION

ABROAD WE ARE INCREASINGLY DEPENDENT FOR ENERGY AND OTHER BASIC
RAW MATERIALS ON POORER NATIONS THAT ARE JEALOUS OF OUR WEALTH
AND SUSPICIOUS OF OUR MOTIVES.

h WE NO LONGER HAVE THE POWER TO SOLVE EVERY INTERNATIONAL
CRISIS AND ENFORCE OUR WILL AROUND THE WORLD BY DIPLOMACY OR
MILITARY MIGHT.

h WE ARE THREATENED WITHIN BY CRIME AND BY THE FEAR THAT CRIME
BREEDS, BY THE RELAXATION OF MORAL AND ETHICAL STANDARDS, AND BY
THE FLIGHT FROM RESPONSIBILITY THAT CAUSES PEOPLE TO DROP OUT, RUN
AWAY FROM THEIR PROBLEMS, OR SEEK REFUGE IN DRUGS AND ALCOHOL.

therefore h WE MUST FACE THE FACT THAT THE 24 YEARS REMAINING IN THIS
CENTURY -- THE YEARS IN WHICH YOUR GENERATION WILL PLAY THE
LEADING ROLE -- MAY BE DECISIVE IN THE FUTURE OF THIS NATION.

h SOMETIME IN THE NEXT QUARTER-CENTURY WE PROBABLY WILL LEARN
WHETHER WE WILL SURVIVE AS A STRONG, FREE NATION, AND AS A
PEOPLE.

Democr Experiment.

THAT IS THE LONG PERSPECTIVE. BUT, EVEN IN THE SHORT RUN
OUR PROBLEMS ARE SEVERE. WE MUST FIND A WAY OUT OF THIS RECESSION
THAT HAS PUT MILLIONS OF AMERICANS OUT OF WORK AND CAUSED UNTOLD
HARDSHIP FOR THE POOR AND THOSE ON FIXED INCOMES.

WE MUST CONSERVE OUR ENERGY SUPPLIES IN ORDER TO REDUCE OUR
DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL IMPORTS.

WE MUST MOBILIZE BOTH PRIVATE AND PUBLIC RESOURCES TO FEED
THE HUNGRY, CLOTHE THE NEEDY, CLEAN UP OUR CITIES, AND MAKE
ADEQUATE HOUSING, HEALTH CARE, JOB TRAINING, EDUCATIONAL
OPPORTUNITIES, AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AVAILABLE FOR ALL OUR
CITIZENS.

Big order, But

I AM AN OPTIMIST BY NATURE. I BELIEVE THAT WE CAN DO ALL
OF THESE THINGS. BUT THOSE OF US IN PUBLIC LIFE, IN POLITICS
AND GOVERNMENT, CANNOT DO IT ALONE. WE NEED YOUR HELP.

WE NEED THE ACTIVE COMMITMENT AND PARTICIPATION OF EVERY AMERICAN
CITIZEN --YOUNG AND OLD, RICH AND POOR, BLACK AND WHITE, MEN
AND WOMEN.

h MEETING THE CHALLENGES WE FACE AS A NATION, ACHIEVING THE
GOALS WE SET FOR OURSELVES AS A SOCIETY -- THE NAME OF THE GAME
IS POLITICS. h DIRTY WORD THOUGH IT HAS BECOME TO SOME PEOPLE,
POLITICS IS THE WAY WE GET THINGS DONE IN OUR SYSTEM.

h IT IS THE LIFE-BLOOD OF OUR REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY.

h IT IS THE VEHICLE OF CHANGE, BRINGING FORTH NEW IDEAS, NEW
CONCEPTS OF GOVERNMENT, AND NEW LEADERS.

h IT IS THE MEANS BY WHICH CONFLICTS AND COMPETING INTERESTS
OF DIFFERENT RACES, RELIGIONS, REGIONS, GENERATIONS, AND CULTURAL
LIFE-STYLES CAN BE RESOLVED PEACEFULLY.

h IT ENABLES US TO CHOOSE FOR OUR LEADERS INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL
REPRESENT AND PROTECT OUR RIGHTS AND INTERESTS, AND TO REMOVE
THEM WHEN THEY FAIL TO DO SO.

h EVERY CITIZEN CAN PARTICIPATE, EVERY CITIZEN MUST
PARTICIPATE IN ORDER FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT TO WORK PROPERLY.

AND YET, AT A TIME WHEN CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS
AND GOVERNMENT IS NEEDED MORE THAN EVER BEFORE, THERE HAS BEEN
A DANGEROUS DECLINE OF PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT AND THE
POLITICAL PROCESS.

Decline in Participation

h DISENCHANTMENT WITH OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM SHOULD NOT BE
OVERSTATED, HOWEVER. h THERE IS HOPE AND A SOLID BASIS FOR REFORM.

h I SEE NO MASS REJECTION OF THE CONGRESS OR THE OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDENCY h NOR DO I SEE PEOPLE GRASPING FOR EXTREME SOLUTIONS.

UNDERNEATH IT ALL, I THINK MOST PEOPLE BELIEVE IN THE ULTIMATE
ABILITY OF AMERICA TO RESOLVE ITS PROBLEMS AND TO CONTINUE TO
PROGRESS. THEY HAVE FAITH IN OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM. PEOPLE
CONTINUE TO THINK THAT THE GOVERNMENT, WITH THE RIGHT LEADERS,
CAN BE MADE TO WORK EFFECTIVELY AND THAT EVEN OUR MOST INTRACTABLE
PROBLEMS LIKE INFLATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT AND ENERGY SHORTAGES
WILL YIELD TO CREATIVE AND ENERGETIC LEADERSHIP.

I AM HERE TO TELL YOU THAT ^{new} THAT LEADERSHIP MUST COME FROM YOU.

WE DESPERATELY NEED THE COMPASSION AND IDEALISM OF YOUTH IN
PUBLIC LIFE.

WE NEED YOUR ENERGY AND YOUR ENTHUSIASM.

WE WELCOME THE PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS AND OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE
WHO TAKE SERIOUSLY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BEING CITIZENS IN A FREE
SOCIETY AND WANT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

BE TRUE TO YOURSELF, LISTEN TO YOUR CONSCIENCE, AND THEN WADE
IN AND SEEK A MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE IN PRACTICAL, REAL POLITICS,

IF YOU THINK POLITICS IS DIRTY, THEN LET ME REMIND YOU OF THE OLD
AXIOM OF POLITICAL SCIENCE: PEOPLE GET THE KIND OF GOVERNMENT THEY
DESERVE. THE COROLLARY OF THAT RULE IS THAT PEOPLE GENERALLY GET
THE KIND OF POLITICIANS THEY DESERVE.

IF YOU THINK POLITICS IS DIRTY, THEN GET IN THERE AND WORK TO
CLEAN IT UP.

IF YOU THINK POLITICIANS ARE CORRUPT AND UNRESPONSIVE TO THE
GREAT NEEDS OF THIS NATION, THEN SEEK OUT AND SUPPORT NEW LEADERS.

Help
ELECT THEM TO OFFICE, OR RUN FOR OFFICE YOURSELVES.

IF YOU THINK GOVERNMENT IS OVERLOADED WITH STALE IDEAS AND
INEFFECTIVE PROGRAMS, BRING US YOUR FRESH IDEAS, YOUR SOCIAL
CONSCIENCE, YOUR VISIONS FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE.

L TELL US WHAT MUST BE DONE AND KEEP AFTER US UNTIL IT GETS DONE.

GET INVOLVED AND HELP US DO THE JOB.

L THIS IS NOT SIMPLE RHETORIC. 1976 IS A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

YEAR. L IN NOVEMBER WE WILL BE CHOOSING A PRESIDENT WHO, FOR THE

NEXT FOUR YEARS, WILL BE DIRECTING THIS NATION'S RESPONSE TO

CRITICAL PROBLEMS SUCH AS UNEMPLOYMENT, INFLATION, ENVIRONMENTAL

POLLUTION, AND ALL THE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE ENERGY CRISIS.

~~L THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES, PRESIDENT FORD AND MR. REAGAN, WILL
RUN ON A PLATFORM OF DISMANTLING OR DRASTICALLY CUTTING FEDERAL
PROGRAMS FOR THE POOR AND HELPLESS IN OUR SOCIETY.~~

~~THEY WOULD HAVE US "LIBERATE" CONSUMERS FROM THE FEDERAL
PROTECTIONS THAT KEEP OUR WORK PLACES SAFE AND HEALTHY, OUR FOOD
PURE AND UNADULTERATED, OUR DRUGS SAFE AND EFFECTIVE, OUR AIR AND
WATER UNPOLLUTED.~~

THEY ARE PERFECTLY SATISFIED WITH A SEVEN PERCENT OR HIGHER NATIONAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FOR AT LEAST THE NEXT TWO YEARS AND EVIDENTLY CONSIDER IT BETTER TO PUT PEOPLE ON WELFARE THAN TO PUT PEOPLE BACK TO WORK.

IN HIS BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 1977, THE PRESIDENT PROPOSES HEAVY CUTS IN ALL SOCIAL PROGRAMS -- PROGRAMS THAT REPRESENT THIS NATION'S COMMITMENT TO MAKE THE AMERICAN DREAM A REALITY FOR ALL AMERICANS, NOT JUST FOR THE PRIVILEGED FEW.

MY PARTY, THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY, REJECTS THAT PHILOSOPHY. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS NOT AN INDEPENDENT ENTITY. IT BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE. IT EXISTS TO SERVE THEM. IT ACCOMPLISHES THINGS WHICH WOULD NOT BE ACCOMPLISHED IN ANY OTHER WAY.

AND IF IT SOMETIMES SEEMS REMOTE OR UNCARING -- IF IT DOES
NOT ALWAYS SERVE THE PEOPLE AS WELL AND EFFECTIVELY AS IT COULD
OR SHOULD, OUR SYSTEM PROVIDES FOR ORDERLY CHANGE. THE PEOPLE
CAN MAKE THEIR GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABLE AND EFFECTIVE, IF ONLY
THEY CARE ENOUGH TO GET INVOLVED AND DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

IF THEY "JUST AREN'T INTERESTED" ENOUGH EVEN TO VOTE, THEY HARDLY
CAN COMPLAIN WHEN THINGS DON'T GO EXACTLY TO THEIR LIKING.

I URGE YOU TO INVOLVE YOURSELVES IN THE NATIONAL DEBATE ON
THESE CONFLICTING PHILOSOPHIES OF GOVERNMENT IN THIS ELECTION YEAR.

I ESPECIALLY URGE YOU TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH WHAT IS GOING ON IN
CONGRESS, BECAUSE THAT IS WHERE THE ISSUES WILL BE DEFINED MOST
CLEARLY, THE OUTCOME WILL BE EXPRESSED IN LEGISLATION THAT WILL
AFFECT EACH OF YOU DIRECTLY AND INDIVIDUALLY.

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MOREOVER, I HOPE THAT MANY OF YOU WILL BE INVOLVED IN AN

ACTIVE WAY IN THE UPCOMING PRIMARIES AND ELECTION CAMPAIGNS.

L FIND CANDIDATES THAT YOU CAN BELIEVE IN. WORK FOR THEM. L DISCOVER

FOR YOURSELVES THE HEARTACHES AND THE REWARDS THAT COME FROM

SEEKING PUBLIC OFFICE.

L I'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT OF ELECTIONS, BUT EVERY ONE IS A
NEW EXPERIENCE. L I MEET WONDERFUL PEOPLE AND I FIND NEW INSPIRATION

IN THEIR PLANS AND HOPES AND DREAMS FOR AMERICA. L IT IS A LEARNING
EXPERIENCE WHICH CANNOT BE OBTAINED IN ANY OTHER WAY.

L I URGE YOU YOUNG PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY, TO GET INVOLVED IN
AND,
POLITICS. ^ WOMEN IN POLITICS TODAY ARE WINNING TREMENDOUS RESPECT

FROM THEIR MALE COLLEAGUES FOR THEIR INTEGRITY, ABILITY AND

DEDICATION.

THEY ARE MAKING POLITICS MORE HUMANE, MORE CONCERNED WITH THE
QUALITY OF LIFE, WITH THE PROBLEMS OF THE POOR, THE SICK, THE
HUNGRY, THE ELDERLY.

WE CANNOT AFFORD TO WASTE ANY TALENTS IN OUR EFFORTS TO
CREATE A MORE JUST, HUMANE, AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY. THE PROBLEMS
WE FACE AS A NATION TODAY WILL REQUIRE THE BEST EFFORTS OF ALL
CITIZENS, MEN AND WOMEN, RICH AND POOR, YOUNG AND OLD, IF WE
ARE TO FIND SOLUTIONS. I URGE YOU TO PLEDGE YOURSELVES
PERSONALLY TO THAT CAUSE IN THIS YEAR OF OUR NATION'S
BICENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY.

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