

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY  
RECEPTION OF MINNESOTA TRADE DELEGATION TO CUBA

Washington, D. C.

April 18, 1977

I am pleased to have this brief opportunity to meet with you today. You are taking an historic step by forming the first large trade delegation to Cuba since the imposition of the U.S. embargo. Such a step clearly is within the fine progressive tradition of our state of Minnesota, which has been a leader in open trade with all countries throughout the world.

Your trip comes at an important time in the development of normalized relations between the United States and Cuba. We have seen several steps which have been taken by the Carter Administration -- steps which I fully support. We have seen the U.S. lift the restrictions on travel to Cuba. We have seen the first set of direct negotiations between our two countries since the early sixties. These are first steps. I hope there will be more.

Recently, in speeches and statements by both President Fidel Castro and Vice President Raul Castro, there is evident a clear moderation in their view toward the United States and an apparent willingness to continue the process of normalization. Their welcoming your delegation also is a clear indication of their desire to resume normal commercial relations with the United States.

But a process of normalization is long and arduous. For 16 years, we have had an embargo on Cuba, forbidding trade and thus virtually any contact between our two peoples.

The time has come for our government to take an important step forward. I suggest that we lift the blockade on food and drugs immediately.

It is humanitarian.

It is helpful to our farmers whose produce the Cubans will buy. Our rice farmers, for example, today sit on vast surpluses. The Cubans would buy 100,000 tons annually. But there are many other grains and meats which Cuba needs, too.

It is good for our working people. Today, Cubans are driving new Fords and new Chevrolets built in Argentina. Those cars could just as well be built in Detroit. There are many more jobs which could be involved in Cuban trade. Subsidiaries of American corporations in third countries last year were licensed by the Treasury Department to sell over \$300 million worth of products, from nuts and bolts to computer parts.

It is good for our businessmen, particularly those who do not have overseas subsidiaries. Estimates of potential Cuban purchases in the United States range from \$350 to \$650 million annually.

It simply is in our American self-interest to lift the blockade quickly. It should be clear to everyone, however, that such a step in no way diminishes our interest and concern for the resolution of many outstanding political problems which have separated our two governments for so long, and which continue to do so.

We are concerned about human rights in Cuba. We are concerned that United States corporations and individuals receive satisfactory compensation for their expropriated property. We are concerned about freedom of emigration and family reunification. We are concerned about Cuba's international role.

But nothing is resolved in these crucial areas so long as the blockade remains. Let us take the first step toward establishing real dialogue. Let us lift the blockade, if only partially, and get to the conference table.

The path toward full diplomatic relations and full normalization is a long one which begins with small steps. This has been the case with respect to the People's Republic of China, where extended discussions have achieved an exchange of liaison missions and a certain amount of trade.

It is my hope that improved relations between our nations can also bring about improved opportunities for the reuniting of families -- a deep concern of the thousands of Cubans who have settled in the United States. From a humanitarian point of view, such a result of a new policy toward Cuba would, in itself, be worth the effort.

I extend to all of you my sincere good wishes for a successful outcome from your trade delegation visit.

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