

REMARKS BY FRANCES HUMPHREY HOWARD
FLORIDA DEMOCRATIC PARTY STATE CONVENTION

Orlando, Florida

November 19, 1977

Secretary Cecil Andrus, Senator Lawton Chiles, State Chairman Alfredo Duran, Vice President Nathalie Gray, Members of the National Committee, distinguished Democrats. It is a privilege for me to be here tonight to receive, on behalf of my brother Hubert, the Florida Democratic Party's first Statesman Award.

Hubert deeply regrets his inability to be here in person. The Democratic Party has been his life's blood, and the opportunity to appear at a gathering of Democrats, no matter how large or how small, anywhere in the country is one he does not easily forego.

He particularly regrets not being here with his friend Lawton Chiles who is such an effective advocate on behalf of Florida's interests in the United States Senate. Senator Chiles has earned the esteem and respect of his colleagues, and Hubert wanted to particularly commend the people of Florida for their wisdom in re-electing this man to a second term in the Senate by such an overwhelming margin.

But, I have a message from Hubert -- a message which is pure, vintage Humphrey. And I want to share his thoughts with you as he reflects on more than four decades of participation in the political processes of this great nation. Here are his words:

"First, I want to express my deepest appreciation for this high honor the Democratic Party of Florida has bestowed upon me. I am humbled by your award and the kindness you have shown me.

"In reflecting upon the past four decades, I want to share a personal experience with you. On August 25, 1935, while on a trip to Washington, I wrote the following to Muriel, who was back in Huron, South Dakota, and had not yet become my wife:

'I simply revel and beam with delight in this realm of politics and government...I shall prepare myself for the task by reading and thinking always as a liberal. Roosevelt is a super-man. His speech last night surely baffled the Republicans; in fact they are lost in a sea of uncertainty as to how attack him.'

"You know, after 42 years, I am still inspired by this realm of politics and government.

"Yet, in the past 42 years we have witnessed vast and unparalleled change, upheaval, and social and economic advancement in this country and the world.

"In foreign policy we have witnessed a dramatic shift in our role in the world. As the past decade drew to a close, we began to learn that the power and resources of the United States are limited. We cannot be the 'policeman' for world peace.

"Even more important, we learned that our knowledge of other peoples -- their real problems and needs -- too often is seriously limited. Many centers of power and contending ideologies are represented in our world community of 150-odd nations.

"On the other hand, the fundamental reality of this world community in the 1970's is that our many nations are ever more interdependent. A serious recession, a shortage of a critical natural resource, a significant increase in the price of oil, or a failure to confront the demands of fair international trade can seriously affect the well-being of all peoples, including our own.

"We are called upon to recognize that the challenges of peace, prosperity, and justice cannot be viewed in isolation from each other. They are unending challenges for which there is no single, immediate or final solution.

"The domestic scene during the past 42 years has been exciting and changing as well. While major problems remain to be addressed, there has been much progress in all areas of our national life.

"Yes, it is an entirely different world than the one I discovered in Washington during August of 1935. But I still see my role as a hard-working public servant, an advisor and a prodder. For the under-privileged of this country and elsewhere, I will continue to push and shove a little, continue to prod and ask a little more than the times and conditions supposedly will permit.

"We have moved from the challenge and revolution of the New Deal days, through the quiet confidence of the Eisenhower years, to the excitement of the New Frontier and the Great Society. Then we went through the tragedy of Vietnam, and the Watergate era which plunged us into a national crisis of spirit.

"But now we are back on track. And it shouldn't come as any surprise that this revitalization is being led by a Democratic President from this region of the country -- Jimmy Carter.

"It is time to get working in this country again. These are exciting and vibrant times. The challenges are many; the problems are immense.

"But we are rekindling that spirit of firm determination to make this a better country and a better world. We are regaining our confidence. Once again, we are reaching for those unreachable heights.

"And why not? Are they really that impossible to achieve? I have no patience with those whose reflex action is to say, 'it can't be done.'

"A nation which has overcome so many technological barriers; a nation which can make a national commitment to send a man to the moon and do it -- that nation, without question, can do more.

"But the greatest frontier we must now cross is the human frontier. This is where our real challenge lies. We must work to overcome the tremendous human problems that face people throughout the world.

"This should be our most exciting endeavor. And, this can be our most exhilarating accomplishment.

"Let's get on with the revolution of achieving the opportunity for all people to enjoy lives of hope, of promise, of freedom, and security.

"We thrive when we confront challenge. We do not retreat. It is not in our national character.

"But it demands commitment.

"Let us use this opportunity tonight to pledge our full efforts, as Democrats, to cross this human frontier.

"Let us commit ourselves to unified action, dedicated to the principle that no problem is too large, and no individual is too insignificant, to give less than our best effort.

"With these thoughts, I want to once again express my deepest gratitude for your very impressive honor. Thank you so much and good luck."

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