



Speech on the Adoption of A Civil Rights Plank

Hubert H. Humphrey

Democratic National Convention, 1948

Transcript

This is the text of the address Mayor Hubert H. Humphrey of Minneapolis delivered before the Democratic National Convention at Philadelphia on Wednesday, July 14, 1948, supporting his civil rights amendment to the party platform:

I realize that I am dealing with a charged issue - with an issue which has been confused by emotionalism on all sides. I realize that there are those here - friends and colleagues of mine, many of them - who feel as deeply as I do about this issue and who are yet in complete disagreement with me.

My respect and admiration for these men and their views was great when I came here.

It is now far greater because of the sincerity, the courtesy and the forthrightness with which they have argued in our discussions.

Because of this very respect - because of my profound belief that we have a challenging task to do here -- because good conscience demands it - I feel I must rise at this time to support this report - a report that spells out our democracy, a report that the people will understand and enthusiastically acclaim.

Let me say at the outset that this proposal is made with no single region, no single class, no single racial or religious group in mind.

All regions and all states have shared in the precious heritage of American freedom. All states and all regions have at least some infringements of that freedom - all people, all groups have been the victims of discrimination.

The masterly statement of our keynote speaker, the distinguished United States

senator from Kentucky, Alben Barkley, made that point with great force. Speaking of the founder of our party, Thomas Jefferson, he said:

"He did not proclaim that all white, or black, or red, or yellow men are equal; that all Christian or Jewish men are equal; that all Protestant and Catholic men are equal; that all rich or poor men are equal; that all good or bad men are equal.

"What he declared was, that all men are equal; and the equality which he proclaimed was equality in the right to enjoy the blessings of free government in which they may participate and to which they have given their consent."

We are here as Democrats. But more important, as Americans and I firmly believe that as men concerned with our country's future, we must specify in our platform the guarantees which I have mentioned.

Yes, this is far more than a party matter. Every citizen has a stake in the emergence of the United States as the leader of the free world. That world is being challenged by the world of slavery. For us to play our part effectively, we must be in a morally sound position.

We cannot use a double standard for measuring our own and other people's policies. Our demands for democratic practices in other lands will be no more effective than the guarantees of those practiced in our own country.

We are God-fearing men and women. We place our faith in the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God.

I do not believe that there can be any compromise of the guarantees of civil rights which I have mentioned.

In spite of my desire for unanimous agreement on the platform there are some matters which I think must be stated without qualification. There can be no hedging - no watering down.

There are those who say to you - we are rushing this issue of civil rights. I say we

are 172 years late.

There are those who say - this issue of civil rights is an infringement on states rights. The time has arrived for the Democratic party to get out of the shadow of state's rights 3 and walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of human rights.

People - human beings - this is the issue of the 20th century. People - all kinds and sorts of people - look to America for leadership - for help - for guidance.

My friends - my fellow Democrats - I ask you for a calm consideration of our historic opportunity. Let us forget the evil passions, the blindness of the past. In these times of world economic, political and spiritual - above all, spiritual crisis, we cannot - we must not, turn from the path so plainly before us.

That path has already led us through many valleys of the shadow of death. Now is the time to recall those who were left on that path of American freedom.

For all of us here, for the millions who have sent us, for the whole two billion members of the human family - our land is now, more than ever, the last best hope on earth. I know that we can - I know that we shall - begin here the fuller and richer realization of that hope - that promise of a land where all men are free and equal, and each man uses his freedom and equality wisely and well.

Source: http://www.mnhs.org/library/tips/history_topics/42humphreyspeech/transcript.htm