

AT ISSUE:

THE VICE PRESIDENCY

A Conversation with Hubert H. Humphrey



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National Educational Television's monthly public affairs program, AT ISSUE is broadcast across the country on the N.E.T. Network of ninety affiliated non-commercial stations.

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Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey

Soon after Hubert H. Humphrey became Vice President of the United States he recorded for the National Educational Television Network his views on the activities and responsibilities of his office. The conversation with Tom Wicker, chief Washington correspondent of the New York Times, took place in the Indian Treaty Room of the Executive Office Building in Washington. The following is a verbatim transcript of that conversation as broadcast on the N.E.T. program "At Issue" in April 1965.

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THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION Network presents *AT ISSUE* from the Executive Office building in Washington, D.C.

The Vice Presidency: A Conversation with the Vice President of the United States, Hubert H. Humphrey. Talking with the Vice President is the Chief Washington Correspondent of the New York Times, Tom Wicker.

WICKER: " 'My country,' Vice President John Adams once remarked, 'has in its wisdom contrived for me the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination can conceive.' Well, a hundred years later Vice President John Nance Garner styled himself a 'spare tire on the automobile of government.' Yet both these men accepted the office and so have many others and at every convention of American political history, the choice of a Vice Presidential candidate has been fought over, haggled over and has been the subject of copious headlines and the reason is plain. John Adams stated that too. The Vice Presidency may seem like a nothing but in one moment of disaster or tragedy the Vice President can become everything, for it is he who succeeds to the Presidency.

"In recent years, probably beginning with Vice President Alben W. Barkley, there has been another reason. Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson have given their Vice Presidents great stature within the administration, numerous assignments and have made them active if perhaps junior partners in government. Richard Nixon, in fact, went on to win the Republican Presidential nomination in 1960, the first Vice President to do so since Martin Van Buren. It's notable that in the 20th century every Vice President who has succeeded to the Presidency has been re-elected; in the nineteenth century none was and some were not even renominated by their parties.

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"When President Kennedy was assassinated, just over a year ago, and the office became vacant, the nation was embarking on the thirty-seventh year in its history in which there was no Vice President. For this reason, President Johnson's choice of a man to run with him was watched closely by the public and in a notable political year that choice was one of the most notable political events. Because of that, the man upon whom that choice fell might well become the most active and prestigious Vice President in the history of our country. Hubert Horatio Humphrey of Minnesota.

"Mr. Vice President, I wonder if you could tell us why you accepted the office of Vice President?"

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: "Well, I do consider the office of Vice President, Mr. Wicker, to be an important office. It is the second highest office within the gift of the American people. I'm somewhat familiar with the historical description of this office, and you've been most kind in your selection. Actually, there were Vice Presidents who had even—I would say, more downgrading words to say about the office of the Vice Presidency. But in this century, the 20th century, particularly in the last 20, 25 years, the office of Vice President has taken on additional responsibilities and duties. What is more, we live in a very troublesome and difficult world, and continuity of leadership for our country, I believe is very, very important. And I think the American people feel that way. As you've indicated, during the time following the death of President Kennedy, when President Johnson succeeded the late President Kennedy and the nation had no Vice President, many people were deeply concerned about this, concerned about the whole subject of Presidential disability, and Presidential succession. So, this office is one of responsibility, at least potential responsibility. It is one of high honor, and any office that is given to a fellow American by the vote of the people, by a majority vote of the people, I think is a very important office. I think that about states my views about it.

"I've been in public life a long time, and I have felt that if one wanted to make a career out of public life or



at least to give of himself to public life, if the opportunity came for service at a higher level, and if the American people felt that you were qualified for that service, you ought to accept that opportunity and that responsibility. That is how I viewed the opportunity to serve as Vice President."

WICKER: "Well, now that you are Vice President, let's begin at the beginning. What are the specific statutory responsibilities provided by law that your office carries with it?"

HUMPHREY: "Well, of course, at first we have our constitutional responsibilities—those are very limited—to preside over the Senate, and to cast a vote in the case of a tie. I think I should note that you spoke of John Adams. When he was Vice President he did not hesitate to be like the majority leader of the Senate. He spoke as the Vice President, he made ringing orations in the Senate. Today, as you know, that is not the precedent, nor does it fall within the tradition of the office. Vice Presidents in the Senate as presiding officers are to be seen—and hopefully quite often—but not to be heard except for procedural matters."

"Following the Constitutional responsibility, there are statutory responsibilities of recent vintage. The Vice President serves as a member of the National Security Council. This is a very important position because the Security Council—the National Security Council—is the chief advisory body to the President on all matters relating to our national security and foreign policy. The recent Presidents have also permitted the Vice President to sit as a member of the Cabinet; again, another advisory capacity with the President.

"The legislation of some years ago, relating to the development of aeronautics and space research, made the Vice President the Chairman of the Space Council. Now, as Chairman of the Council he works with the Department of Defense, the Atomic Energy Commission, the National Aeronautics and Space Agency, to tie together the developments in aviation, in aeronautics, and in space research. This is a very important assignment, exceedingly important in fact, I might say that this can take your full time. And then, as you know, there are other responsibilities that are delegated to the Vice President by the President."

WICKER: "Yes, well, I was interested in your comments about the Vice President's role in the Senate, presiding over the Senate. Now, Vice President Calvin Coolidge was not thought of as perhaps the most vigorous President we ever had. But he had a reputation as Vice President for presiding over the Senate in a certain pre-emptory manner and he even said once that the Vice President often decides what business is to be taken up, and who is to have the floor at a specific time. Is that really any longer possible in the Senate as it is today? Do you think to have that kind of procedural influence?"

HUMPHREY: "I doubt it. I suppose technically, you could, but practically, you wouldn't. However, the Vice President does determine who will be recognized in the Senate, and this of course, is very important. The man that is recognized first, or the rotation of recognition is important. But speaking for myself and having watched the service of other Vice Presidents, we do this as a mat-

ter of custom, and as a matter of good manners. You recognize the majority leader whenever he seeks recognition. You recognize the minority leader following the majority leader. You try to recognize a Democrat and then a Republican, that is on ordinary matters. When you get into a hot debate, where the issues are difficult, you recognize on the basis of who is up first—whether the Vice President's eye catches a particular person. Now, of course, you can occasionally blink. But I think that most Vice Presidents try to play it pretty fair, and as we say, on the level.

"There are some other statutory responsibilities that I momentarily forget. The Economic Opportunity Act, makes it possible for the Vice President to serve on the Economic Opportunity Council."

WICKER: "Now, that's in the poverty program?"

HUMPHREY: "Yes, and the Peace Corps, provides—the Peace Corps Act provides that the Vice President shall be Chairman of the Advisory Commission of the Peace Corps. These are reasonably important assignments because in the advisory capacity you do have an opportunity to help shape the program and to give some tone and guidance to the administration of that program. I wouldn't want to overestimate the importance of the position, but it does bring you into the flow of the activities. And I find now, at this particular stage when the Anti-Poverty Program, the war on poverty, is so important, and so closely tied in with many of the things that we're doing here at home, in the field of civil rights, and also in terms of our foreign policy, that to have some position in these programs is very helpful."

WICKER: "Well, to use your phrase 'to be in the flow of government,' isn't this really where the growth in the importance of the office is consistent in the past couple of decades? That the Vice President now is so much more into things, which is the only way he can really be prepared if the worst event happens, and he has to take over."

HUMPHREY: "Yes, I think that's very right, Mr. Wicker. President Johnson has told me that he wants to be sure that I'm well informed to the best of my ability, on all mat-

ters of public policy, national security, and domestic policy. I think this is good sound practice whoever may be the Vice President, because it is so helpful in the continuity of leadership. As I indicated earlier, the importance of this office does provide continuity of leadership.

"The Vice President today really has his responsibilities at the option or should I say, at the will of the President. You're the kind of a Vice President that the President wishes you to be. That is, if you have the ability, if you have the desire. The President can make you a very busy Vice President, he can make you an active Vice President. He can make you one that is close in on the administration, or he can leave you without many duties except those we've listed under statutory responsibilities and the Constitutional responsibility of presiding over the Senate.

"As you've indicated, in recent years Presidents have seen fit to ask their Vice Presidents to do more. Why? Because there's more to do in government today. It is utterly impossible for a President alone to undertake all of the many duties of his office without some assistance and help and a Vice President in many ways, becomes like a special assistant to the President, not an assistant president. I want to make that clear, there are no assistant presidents, we have but one President, and we must adhere to that constitutional position of one president. But a Vice President can be a helper to a President. He can be sort of a special assistant to a President, an advisor to a President. When I read, as I have on occasion, that you could make the Vice President into an assistant President, that is not true. And I don't think it ought to be true."

WICKER: "You have made a very important change in your life, moving from the Senate to the Vice Presidency. In making that changeover, have you found that your habits had to be changed or have there been any interesting experiences in trying to make the adjustment?"

HUMPHREY: "Well, I think the most difficult adjustment that I've had is answering the telephone. I have been so accustomed to saying over the years, 'This is Senator

Humphrey,' so that every time that phone rings and I am talking to one of my former colleagues in the Congress or even some good friend, why, I'll say—I'll pick up the phone and I'll say, 'This is Senator Humphrey.' And every so often one of my more or less fun-loving humorist colleagues will say, 'Well, we don't want you any more; you're now Vice President.' That's really been one of the adjustments that's been rather difficult for me to get accustomed to, being called Mr. Vice President."

WICKER: "Well, I suppose that it must have been, but on the other hand, despite your humorous colleagues, the Senate really hasn't made it very difficult for you to preside has it?"

HUMPHREY: "Not particularly. Except you know, I think you were around there the first day, Mr. Wicker that I presided, and that was an exciting day for me. I wondered how it would feel, you know, to walk up to the podium and the presiding officer's desk and platform and take the gavel and call the Senate to order. And after I had done so, the Majority Leader asked for recognition and the Vice President recognized the Majority Leader, then he made a very nice complimentary statement about his former Majority Whip colleague.

"And then my colleagues in the Senate had a field day for themselves. One after another they got up and said what a blessing it was, what great things had happened. Now this rather loquacious Senator, former Senator from Minnesota, was now silenced. And he would be only the presiding officer. He could make no speech. And they were asking for rulings from the chair as to whether or not a Senator could—a Vice President could make any speeches. And after a good deal of byplay and horseplay, so to speak, all in good humor—in fact I think it was one of the nicest compliments I have ever had because it was in such good humor—one of the Senators, it was Senator Aiken of Vermont, he moved that the Vice President, despite the Constitution, despite the rules of procedure, despite every limitation of tradition and precedent, should be given three minutes, to respond, to speak.



"Well, then there was a debate over that. And then, in good humor, the senators finally decided that the unanimous consent request should be granted. And the presiding officer, namely Vice President Humphrey, hearing no objection, said that the unanimous consent request had been granted and proceeded to speak. And I told them that there were many blessings that had come to our nation through this election, and one of them they had referred to, namely that the Vice President would no longer be on the floor of the Senate and no one would have to listen to his speeches. Then I went on to point out that the presiding officer really didn't need the speeches; he had other ways and means of impressing the Senate.

"But above all, I only used two minutes and 47 seconds. And I reminded my colleagues . . ."

WICKER: "Was that a record?"

HUMPHREY: "Well, not quite a record. But I saved 13 seconds for other days, and I still have that coming. And I want, even on this program, to forewarn my brethren of the Senate."

WICKER: "Thirteen seconds is due sooner or later. Well, you

were not known in the Senate, however, merely as a speaker. Although you certainly were known for that. But you were considered quite able to take care of yourself in the political field, too. And I wondered if you had to—have you had to eschew politics as Vice President or do you see certain ways in which you can be helpful in that field, too?"

HUMPHREY: "Well, surely when you are Vice President you are Vice President of all the people of the United States, that's true. But you are also a member of a political party. And one of the roles of a Vice President is to help his party. And in a sense, really help the President carry the message of the Administration and of the party to the people.

"Then, too, from time to time, as you well understand and know, the party coffers run a little dry, and we have what we call these Jefferson-Jackson Day dinners, like the Republican friends have the Lincoln Day dinners. And it's on those occasions that the Vice President may be called upon to go out and deliver a ringing oration on the virtues and the values of the . . ."

WICKER: "Not in three minutes, either."

HUMPHREY: ". . . the Democratic administration. And at the time, you are permitted to speak as long as they will listen to you.

"So, the Vice President does have a role in the politics of the government, in the politics of the party. But we try not to overdo that. And the Vice President doesn't go to every little meeting. He is asked to go primarily to the meetings that are well planned and larger meetings, where he could be of some help."

WICKER: "Have you found in your experience, and you observed President Johnson, of course, from the other side, then Vice President Johnson—have you found in your experience that there is something approaching resentment on the part of Congress towards the Vice President in the sense that he has become more a member of the Executive Branch? Does the separation of powers affect this in anyway?"

HUMPHREY: "Well, I possibly haven't been Vice President long enough to either, number one, perceive any resent-

ment if it is there—because I may be one to pretend that it wasn't—or to feel any resentment. I haven't sensed that—what you might call resentment. I do feel and do believe that the members of the Congress do look upon you pretty much as an executive officer. But there are rather close relationships today in American government between the Legislative and the Executive Branches of government, except when there is a crucial issue in which there is broad disagreement between the two departments—or two branches of government. No, I would say thus far, that the members of the Legislative Branch have been very cordial, I've been invited into their meetings. I never go by myself, I mean by my own volition, or by my own decision. I wait for an invitation.

"I am available, I am accessible, I try to spend a good deal of time on Capitol Hill. I use the telephone. I have social visits. I meet with the members of the House and the Senate on matters that may be of concern to them or of the administration. I have no hesitancy in calling up a senator or congressman on a particular matter if it is in the interest of the administration's program, and if it has been discussed with the President or with the—one of the President's Cabinet officers.

"But I believe that the American people should know that members of the Legislative Branch are rightfully jealous of their prerogative, and they do not want to have the Executive Branch with an overbearing attitude or a sort of all consuming involvement or envelopment of the Legislative Branch. I think I've learned that—as a former senator 16 years in the Senate. I respect the Senate, I surely respect the House, I learned how to respect them (*members of the House*) in conference committees, I have great respect for the Speaker, the office of the Speaker, the Majority Leader, the Minority Leader, both the House and the Senate. And any Vice President that thinks that he can fulfill their roles or interfere with their roles, is—well, he has outlined for himself disaster."

WICKER: "Well, this opens an interesting avenue. You worked 16 years in Congress, and in the Senate, and now Vice President. Does anything occur to you that

now looks different? You're approaching something from the side that you were on. Do you see any way in which your views may have changed, or been modified perhaps is a better expression, by your leap from branch to branch?"

HUMPHREY: "Well, only in this sense, that when I was a United States Senator representing not only my state, but I trust the United States, there were times that I would have to battle very hard for the interest of my state. And, I can see now, for example, when we seek to make certain economy moves in the Executive Branch of the Government, and I think well-needed and justified economy moves, those moves may for the moment seem to adversely affect a particular district or state.

"Well, now, as a Congressman and as a Senator, you get in there and you're fighting for your district and your state, and I haven't forgotten that that's the way I acted. But I must say that when you work with the Bureau of the Budget as closely as the President must and he has permitted his Vice President also to work with the Bureau of the Budget, when you see the total national picture, when you take a good hard look at the over-all national budget, you can't become quite as excited, you know, about a particular post office or hospital, or research establishment as some member of the House or Senate might be. But I'm not critical of the House members and the Senate members. They have their duties to do—to perform. They have their responsibilities. But what we, in the Executive Branch, must try to do is demonstrate to the majority of the members of the House and the Senate that the national interest is better served by following the presidential recommendations."

WICKER: "Well, isn't this often anyway, the prime source of Executive-Legislative conflict—an approach to the national interest from one side, a collection of local interests on the other side?"

HUMPHREY: "Very much so, and if you let these matters get out of hand, it can jeopardize very important national programs that are truly needed. And I believe that here is a place where a Vice President can be of some help if he will take the time and has the patience to work

with and talk to and visit with members of the House and the Senate, about the over-all national purpose, as related to the local or the state or the regional need. I don't say that you necessarily change a member's point of view, or change his vote, but you may soften his sense of opposition or remorse or of criticism, you see.

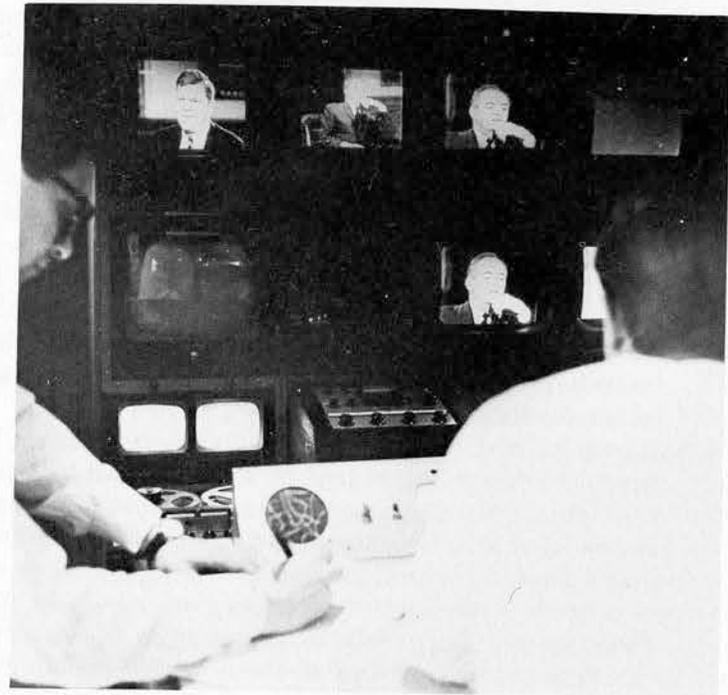
"It's all a matter of degree around here. Many times people in public—in private life do not understand that you can disagree with a man on one issue, very vigorously and have him as a strong supporter with you the next day on another issue. And I believe the job of a man in public life, and maybe this is one thing the Vice President can be helpful about, is to try to ease these matters a bit try to cut off the rough edges. Even though you do not change the vote, you may in a sense change the heart a little bit, and if you can do that, you've performed a service."

WICKER: "Indeed you would have. Well, your two immediate predecessors, Mr. Nixon and President Johnson both undertook important missions abroad for their presidents. Do you anticipate that you'll be assigned to that kind of representation?"

HUMPHREY: "If the President sees the need of that, yes. I want to make it quite clear, I do not believe that as Vice President I should be traveling abroad just on my own volition, unless it seems to fit in with some need of the foreign policy of our country or of the expressed wish of the President. I feel very conscious of this, and very responsible to it. I did not become Vice President with President Johnson to cause him trouble. I feel a deep sense of loyalty and fidelity. I believe that if you can't have that, you have no right to accept the office. Because today it is so important that a President and his Vice President be on the same wave length, for lack of a better phrase, that you work together. Of course, there'll be differences occasionally. They ought to be very private. Of course, there may be rough moments, inevitably in a free country where there's free speech and free press. But a Vice President ought to bend himself in every way to lean over backwards, as we say, to be in tune with, and working with, and cooperating

with, at all times with his President.

"Now, in this area of foreign policy, of all the areas in which the President has supreme voice, this is it. You can't have a dozen people running the foreign policies in this country. And you ought not have half a dozen spokesmen. We have a President who is the chief spokesman for this nation in the field of foreign policy, and he makes the policy. Now, a Secretary of State may administer it or execute it, or Defense Secretary may carry out a certain aspect of our national security policy, but it is the President's policy. And for a Vice President just to be flitting off and deciding that he would like to carry a message of goodwill someplace, or that he would like to investigate something, or he would like to see the other half of the world, I think that that is something that he ought not to do, and if he has the desire to travel like that, he ought to wait until he's out of office, or that he should have done it while he was a Senator or a Congressman. And I did some while I was a Senator, not as



much as I maybe should have. But I have talked with President Johnson about this, we have a very good understanding, and at the proper time, when and if I'm needed, and there is a goodwill mission to be performed, I suppose he may call upon me. If there is a trouble spot where I can serve, he may call upon me, as President Kennedy did with President Johnson. And you can recall, I think, one of the best examples I think of is when President Kennedy sent Vice President Johnson to Berlin at the height of that Berlin crisis."

WICKER: "In 1961."

HUMPHREY: "You also can recall when President Johnson carried the messages of friendship and goodwill to certain nations—African nations—I remember his trip to Senegal. You may recall the Vice President's trips to India and Pakistan, I'm sure you remember the trip to Pakistan . . ."

WICKER: "And the camel driver."

HUMPHREY: "And the camel driver. Now, all of these—these missions, and I'm very familiar with them, were cleared with the White House, not only cleared, but they were discussed and it was felt desirable by the then President Kennedy that the Vice President should make these trips. This is exactly the way it will be from here on out as far as Vice President Humphrey is concerned."

WICKER: "In the whole process of keeping you informed, knowledgeable about the government, how much does the President simply discuss with you—not so much the operations which will be evident—but his ideas and the thinking that goes behind the enunciation of a policy and so forth? Do you have regular conferences on these matters, or is it more nearly as the mood or the moment seizes the President?"

HUMPHREY: "Our relationship is informal and formal. We have, of course—I'm invited by the President to attend the Cabinet meetings, and by the way, that's an experience that should be recorded for history because President Johnson conducts a cabinet meeting like a director of a great symphony would conduct the New York Philharmonic. He's really a master at it. The information that comes from one of these cabinet meetings is,

well, it's an educational experience that you can never ever have any place else: how he draws information from each person, and how he brings it together and puts it into proper perspective, and makes it understandable for each of us. Surely that is a formal meeting in a sense, but conducted in a rather informal manner.

"But my relationships with the President, that is the Vice President's relationship with the President, becomes somewhat like man to man, and friend to friend. From time to time we have dinner together—the President and Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Humphrey and myself—with his friends and with our friends. And there are many times during the day that we visit. We may go three or four days and have no visit. We may have a day in which we are together all day long. Every time there is a National Security Council meeting, of course I am invited as the Vice President. The President sees to that. He sees to it that I am fully informed through his top people, his Secretary of State, his Director of Central Intelligence, through his Secretary to the National Security Council, his Special Assistant on Foreign Affairs.

"The President has directed each of these fine public officials to see to it that his Vice President is fully informed. I must say that he has gone out of his way to do this, even more than one should have any right to expect. But our relationships are sometimes more like man to man and friend to friend. We discuss personalities and issues and programs and international crises, the politics of the country, even a good news story once in a while, like Mr. Wicker's."

WICKER: "And also a few bad ones."

HUMPHREY: "But I think it's fair to say that the relationships are not maybe quite as formal as one would be led to believe by reading the textbooks. Remember, your President and your Vice President have known each other for 20 years, almost 20 years. And well, about—actually, we've known each other for 17 years. This is a good friendship and we have been many places together and have done many things together. And while now the President of course has the tremendous responsibility of President—and once a man becomes President, he is no

longer a private person; nevertheless he is a human being and he is a man with his friends and his thoughts and his feelings and his emotions.

"And a Vice President is the same kind of a man. So that we do have a chance to discuss everything, Mr. Wicker, including how the baseball team is coming and some of the little things in life. Everything is not grim. As a matter of fact, a good deal of the time we just have an opportunity to discuss some of the developments in the nation's capital and what is happening in terms of the cultural development of our country, the economic development of our country, who is coming to the White House and what kind of people are they, every conceivable subject.

WICKER: "Well, it's generally thought in Washington that President Johnson, his whole administration, is following a policy of the idea of consensus politics. Do you think this is true? And if so, how would you define that? What sort of approach to political accomplishment is that?"

HUMPHREY: "Well, President Johnson truly lives by his favorite passage from Scripture, from the Book of Isaiah. 'Come let us reason together.' This isn't just a phrase with President Johnson. He really practices it. And he brings people together. He is a man that believes in trying to get a maximum amount of agreement, which lends itself, of course, to support. He does not believe in the class struggle. He does not believe that you ought to pit capital against labor, or city against farm, or North against South, or race against race.

"I have listened to him over the years. This isn't something new. He has always been one that tried to bind up the wounds, tried to unite rather than to divide, tried to bring together rather than split asunder. And when he talks about the politics of consensus, or as the President has said, that he seeks a consensus, he doesn't mean that he insists that everybody agree at once on a particular issue. He doesn't ask for unanimity, but he asks for a degree of unity in which there are differences, to be sure, but that those differences are worked out, thought out in a sense, compromised out, until you get

a wide enough base of acceptance and understanding and support to make a public policy publicly acceptable.

"Now, it's one thing to pass a law and it's another thing to get people to observe it. It's one thing for a President to sit in the White House and to say this is what I believe and this is what America should do, and it's another thing to have the American people follow that leadership. And President Johnson not only is willing to take the risk of leadership, of saying this is what we ought to do, but before he makes that statement, he carefully surveys the social and economic landscape—terrain. He sees what can be done to bring forces together so that his leadership will be more than a statement of public policy; in fact, it will become the fulfillment of public policy.

"I guess that it's fair to say that consensus in a democracy like ours, in a system of government where there is a division of responsibility and power, in a nation in which there are 50 separate states or commonwealths in one nation, in one United States, a consensus in a country that has different races, creeds and religions and different degrees of social and economic development, what you mean by consensus is getting a broad enough base amongst all of these many forces and factors, so that you have roots in each area and roots deep enough and strong enough so that the policy which you announce or which is passed by the Congress or which is laid down by the President isn't blown off the landscape with the first little wind of turbulence. But it's there, it can stick.

"And this takes time and it takes a tremendous amount of effort. I have watched the President work at this over a long period of time. I don't know if I've explained it as well as I should. But many people would have you believe that consensus means that you tolerate no difference. That isn't at all right. Consensus means that you have a big enough majority so that the majority can withstand the attack and the gnawing away at the foundations of that majority.

"A majority—or a minority support of a policy generally ends up with the policy being either repudiated

or ineffective. A slim majority support for policy may tide you through, if you can broaden that base of support, so that it isn't just a Democratic policy or it isn't just a capital or a labor policy or a farm policy, but that you broaden the base so that you tie in other groups so that the policy has greater acceptance and greater understanding—a greater understanding—then you have consensus."

WICKER: "Well, do you think that, as a practical legislative matter in dealing with the Congress, is it possible to proceed to some of those very controversial measures the President has proposed to proceed on this basis, or will there come a time, in your opinion, where it will have to be just a desperate struggle for a given vote? Will the President proceed in that way or will he wait in those cases?"

HUMPHREY: "No, I don't think you should expect that on every issue that you can have as broad a base or as broad a consensus as you would like. But you ought to seek it; you ought not to go out of your way to destroy the possibilities of consensus. And you can do that sometimes inadvertently.

"Timing, as we say in politics, is very important. Now, why do we say that? Because what we're really doing is trying to bring to a head or to a climax, a vote or an issue or a policy when there is public acceptance. Now, you don't just follow the public; you lead the public. You educate even as you legislate.

"Take for example the President's program in the field of education, federal aid to education. Now he's come up with some novel adaptations here; some new ideas of how we can really bring better educational opportunity to the underprivileged in particular, how we can help cities and localities as well as states, how we can help the higher education as well as the elementary and secondary education.

"Now, he didn't just announce this policy. He's been working at this for a long, long time. And groups all over America were set up to work on it. He tied in the ideas of many groups. So when the Presidential message on education went to the Congress it wasn't just the view

of President Johnson, even though he was the one that took the lead; it represented the views of thousands of people, of many different organizations that never before had been able to agree. He brought them together. He has an uncanny ability at this. This is really a skillful—it's almost a scientific or ingenious way of doing it.

"I have often said that some people could practice the piano for 50 years and never become a true, great musician. And it's like that in politics, you can be in public life for 50 years and you're well—you do well, you do fairly well, you do creditably well, but you're not a master at it. And the master, the true greatness of a man in politics is within him. It's his own knack, his own capacity, his own ability. It's his own touch. It's the difference between being a painter and an artist. It's the difference between being able to play the piano and being a concert pianist. And I think that President Johnson is an artist when it comes to the molding of public opinion and the designing of public policy. And I really believe that there has never been anybody, in my lifetime at least, that ever had this capacity.

"I don't like to make comparisons. But a man like President Truman is a courageous leader, tremendous man. I greatly admire him. But it's fair to say that, while he was able to make these very difficult decisions, particularly in the field of foreign policy, for which the whole world owes him a debt, that insofar as being able to gain the consensus to support those policies, he had less success. Now, President Johnson is also having to make great decisions at home and abroad, and many are yet to come. And in this decision-making process, I believe you will also find that he has the consensus-making capacity to bring more and more people to support this.

"Now, this isn't often very glamorous. It really isn't. It requires painstaking effort, meticulous detail, constant attention to just little things. In fact, if you make too much of a splash about it, too much of a dramatic performance out of it, it will fail because part of the success of gaining a consensus is to do it quietly. You don't do it by breaking up—do it unobtrusively."



WICKER: "And not necessarily seem to be doing it."

HUMPHREY: "And not necessarily seem to be doing it, that is correct, sir."

WICKER: "I see, well, with all these great gifts, as you describe them, President Johnson is attempting to build what he referred to as the Great Society. It's become almost a slogan of his admission. I wonder if you could give us your view of what he means by the Great Society? Is this a philosophical concept, as it would seem to have been in his Inaugural Address, or is it a legislative program, as it might have seemed in his State of the Union Message? What is your view of his intentions and meaning here?"

HUMPHREY: "Well, surely the Great Society has some legislative connotations because there are programs being presented by the President to the Congress that relate to his understanding and his vision of the meaning of the Great Society. Sometimes you can describe what you mean by a term or a concept by pointing out what it is not, as well as what it is, what you intend as well as what you didn't intend.

"The Great Society is a philosophical description of

the kind of life that we would like our nation to have, the quality of our civilization, not just the quantity. For example, we can talk about the growth of our gross national product, the efforts that are being made to reduce unemployment. All of this is important, very, very important. And it is a contribution to the meaning and to the achievement of the goal of the Great Society.

"But more importantly, I think, what we mean by the Great Society is what do we do with the wealth; for what purpose is this economic growth, for what purpose do we seek a higher per capita income, for what purpose do we seek to make America strong? Well, we do not seek to make America strong for purposes of aggression, but actually to safeguard freedom. We do not want America's wealth just for the purpose of luxury, but rather for the enrichment of life; yes, the beautification of our country and the betterment of our education, the improvement of our cultural standards and cultural institutions, so that the wealth, the economic wealth of an economic system is in a sense partially used to bring about the spiritual wealth of a social structure.

"And I would say that what we are seeking to do in the Great Society is to make it possible for mankind to be constantly emancipated from his fears, his prejudices, his diseases and his heartaches and his grief, to bring people to a better realization of the purpose of life itself, which is the purpose of service and of building and of creating. It's a tone. I think what we mean by Great Society is—is not just building a new building, but making it beautiful. It's the difference between building a blockhouse and a cathedral. It's the difference between having a juke box which gives you music and a beautiful orchestra which gives you a sort of a replay of the soul.

"That's a longterm objective. The Great Society will not be realized in a hurry, any more than peace can be achieved in a decade. I said some time ago, speaking of this, that peace was like a mighty cathedral. It required a master architect, but the labor of many generations. And it may not come in our lifetime, just as most of the great cathedrals of Europe were never constructed

within the lifetime of the architect or the initial builder. The important thing is you keep adding something to the structure. And in the process of adding to it, do you glorify it or do you, in a sense, corrupt it? And what we are seeking to do as we build this—this richer society in terms of material things, more homes and better buildings and bigger bank accounts—what we also should be seeking to do is to not only have more houses but a greater degree of happiness within the community, and not only greater bank accounts, but seeing to it that the social values of our society, the quality of justice, of opportunity, is protected and is advanced just as we seek to advance markets and economics. I—this is a philosophical subject, may I say, that can take an awful lot of time.”

WICKER: “Well, in the pursuit of all the assignments that you’ve been given and the more intangible task that you’ve been describing about the Great Society, in the whole scope of the activities that are yours now, I wonder if you could bring it down to a rather specific description for us of what a typical day in the Vice President’s life might be—choosing a day you want, but give us an idea of the specific range of things you cover in your . . .”

HUMPHREY: “You know you so activate my mind that before I get to that, I just want to say this: I can’t think of any more exciting period in human history to be alive than right now. And actually I think what our government is doing, and what’s happening in our country is very challenging and exciting. It’s tremendous the number of new things going on, not only in science and technology, but here’s an America today that really says it can whip poverty. Nobody ever—nobody ever dared talk about that before. We’re at a time where we can honestly say that we can even banish hunger. We’re really almost at the point where we can say we can conquer disease and there’s just so many things happening, that instead of us becoming more materialistic, we’re becoming more idealistic and you have young people by the thousands that are anxious to get into the battle to build a better and a more just and a more equitable society. They want

to abolish and eradicate racial and religious prejudice. Why, we’ve been living with racial and religious prejudice for thousands of years. And now we have people that have dedicated their life to its abolition and its destruction. I think this is a glorious period in which to live. I just wanted to add that on to my reactions about the times, and the challenges of the times.

“My day—you asked me what kind of a day do I have? Starts early and ends late. And every hour to me with few exceptions is one that I like and that I enjoy, and above all that keeps me feeling fit and optimistic, and at least young of heart and young of spirit. I seldom weary, there are times that I’m fatigued out of sheer physical fatigue, but not spiritually or mentally, or philosophically.

“I start out early in the morning about 7:30. I try to get to my office as close to 9:00, right around 9:00-9:15. I could come in earlier, but actually I can do many telephone calls from my home, and it’s a little quieter then and not quite as active as downtown. I read all the way downtown in the car, work on my papers. Come to my office. I have a full day.

“Every day is scheduled. In fact, Mr. Wicker, we schedule weeks ahead of time. Sometimes meetings and speeches, like college commencement exercises, I have the months of June and July already scheduled almost entirely, with the exception of noon lunches and a few breakfasts. Frequently, we have to change that schedule because something develops, people have to be understanding of that. I generally work until 7:00-7:30, sometimes much later. Then there’s generally a dinner in the evening, or a gathering that I attend. I may speak at a meeting, or I may go to a dinner for one of the foreign dignitaries that’s here, or may have to travel. I generally put in a good—oh, minimum of 16 hours—14 to 16 hours a day. Once in a while I have it a little easier, maybe get an eight, a ten or 12 hour day. But I’m not complaining. Frankly, I like that, I enjoy that type of life, and have no complaints.

“The day will also include meetings in the Congress. It will include meetings with the President. It will in-

clude a meeting possibly with some Cabinet officers, some foreign visitor, signing mail, dictating mail. I've learned how to use every single minute of the day, every minute. When I travel by plane, I take suitcases full of papers, I read incessantly. And I make notes—I have a portable Dictaphone as well as one in every place that I go. So, if you learn how to use your time, you can get an awful lot done, and besides that I have fun. I wouldn't—I tell you, if you can't have a little fun at it, you ought to quit."

WICKER: "Well, I'm sure that's true. Does that much activity in itself keep your waistline down and yourself in shape, or do you find time to get into the gym or the pool?"

HUMPHREY: "Once in a while I get into the gym, I ought to do it more often, frankly."

WICKER: "Where, at the Senate?"

HUMPHREY: "Yes. I do not do as good a job in taking care of myself as I should that way. When I get to feeling a little weary then I always go—you see it's like when I go to the gym—if I become too ill or something I may go to the doctor. I am seldom ill. I do feel that one can do a little better if he's physically fit. I try to be reasonably careful. I quit smoking many years ago and I know that that's made me feel 100 per cent better. I do not watch my diet as well as I should but it doesn't seem to bother too much. But that waistline business, it hasn't been a serious problem with me, but let me say there are signs of the times occasionally."

WICKER: "Well, we've been talking in the—what is known as the Indian Treaty Room of the old State Department Building and a little anecdote about the Vice Presidency occurred right in this room."

"President Eisenhower held his news conferences here, and it was here that he made a famous reply to a question. He was asked what had been a major contribution of Vice President Nixon to his Administration, and he said, 'Well, if you'll give me a week I can think of one.' Now that leads me to ask you, since we are in these surroundings, what you think in the long run over the period of a term in office, what can be your major contribution of all the many that you can make to Presi-



dent Johnson?"

HUMPHREY: "To give him a sense of my feeling of friendship, of loyalty, of comfort. I'd hate to have the President be worried about me, that I may do something that would cause him embarrassment or that would injure his Administration. And with human beings this is always a possibility. If I can be a friendly adviser, if from time to time I can lift some little burden from him, even though it may not amount to much. I think that would be a real contribution."

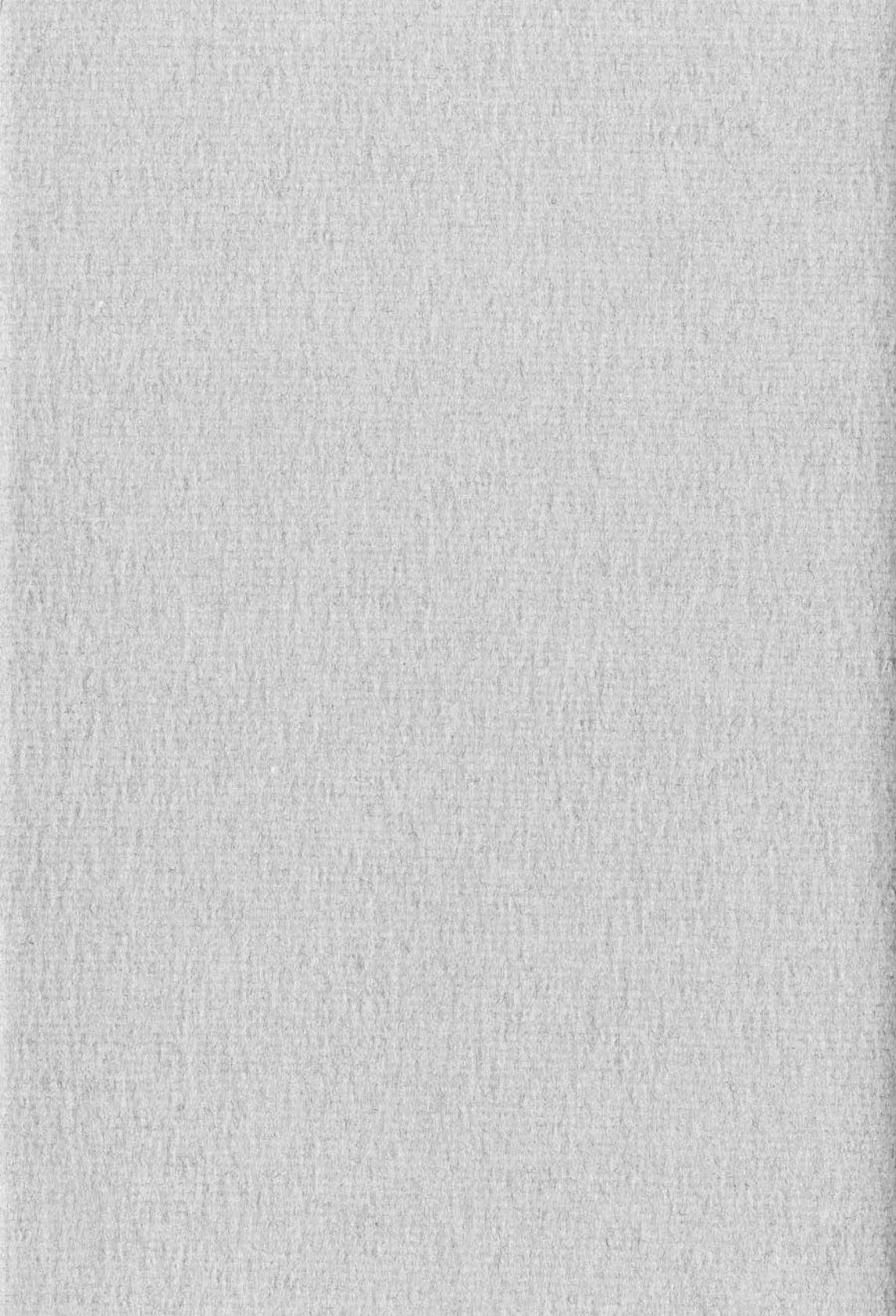
"I don't expect that you will find any Humphrey program, any great Humphrey messages, any great Humphrey policies, because there aren't any. I am the Vice President of the United States, Mr. Wicker, and that means that I will support the President. I will try to help make a contribution to President Johnson's program. I will try to have my friends become loyal friends of President Johnson. As I've said to my staff, there are no Humphrey people, there are no Humphrey policies, there are no Humphrey programs. Whatever we have we should try to contribute, if it's wanted, to the President and his Administration. You can't have two leaders

of the Executive Branch at one time, you ought to have one.

“Now I want to say very frankly, I’m quite content with this. Because I’d rather have the privilege of one hour with the President alongside of him, visiting with him, sharing my thoughts with him, than to have 2 years on the outside wondering whether I could ever get inside even to talk to him for just a few minutes. When you are Vice President with a friendly relationship with your President you can make as much of a contribution to your country that way as you could in almost any position. Because any President will surely admit that he seeks the advice and counsel of many. And if I can be at his side as a welcomed and wanted friend and partner, then any thoughts that I may have, and any dreams that I may have, and any ideas that I may have, and any feeling about policy that I may have I can share with him. And if I’m persuasive, if I have something really to offer, these ideas and thoughts will find their way into public policy. They maybe won’t have one’s name on them, but it isn’t necessary always to have your name on something. What is more important is when you read the book of history that something was done, and it was accomplished. There’s always plenty of room in the hallway of success for everyone. But, oh how lonesome you are in failure. And I feel that if the Administration can be successful, if the President’s policies—policies to which many people may have made a contribution, if those policies can be effective, then we’re all better off, and there’ll be a good chapter of our history.

“If those policies are a failure because you did something that caused trouble, or because you didn’t share in advice and counsel, didn’t do your best, then it’s a sad chapter. So I guess, to put it quite directly to you, that I consider it a high honor, a sobering responsibility and a rare privilege to be Vice President of the United States.”

WICKER: “Thank you, Mr. Vice President. It’s been very pleasant talking to you.”





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