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Office of the Press Secretary
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON
DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S CLUBS OF KENTUCKY
SHERATON HOTEL
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY
OCTOBER 5, 1968

I am glad to be here in Kentucky. We Johnsons have strong bonds of friendship and family with the people of this State.

Some of the ancestors in whom we feel the greatest pride came from Kentucky. They traveled many years ago to the Texas frontier: people like Eliza Bunton of Russellville, and John Huffman of Bourbon County; proud names like DeSha and Perrin.

And in these past five years, we've had other reasons to be grateful to Kentucky. In fact, I don't believe we could have functioned in the White House if Kentucky had not given us Bess Clements Abell.

I associate this State with men and women of great fortitude, great spirit, and political understanding -- leaders like the legendary Alben Barkley and Earle Clements. And today, Katherine Peden and Wendell Ford carry on in their tradition. And I know many of you are working hard for Tom Ray and Gus Sheehan for Congress.

I'm glad to have an opportunity to join you today -- to reflect upon the choice which faces our country.

For almost thirty-four years, I have been at the side of a man deeply immersed in public life and public service. Yet I have never thought of myself as a political person. I have seen my role rather as companion, mother, and citizen.

But through the years, I have come to respect and to love our party -- the Democratic Party -- as the party of heart and compassion: truly the party of the people.

Today I speak not merely out of concern for our party. I speak as a woman and a citizen, somewhat troubled by the high noise level of this campaign.

I believe we are in danger of forgetting the real issue which is at stake in America this autumn.

What is that issue? What is the real question which will be decided at the polls in November?

I believe it is this: Will America, having forged so far ahead under President Kennedy and President Johnson toward a more just and compassionate society, now turn back? Will we continue on the upward, hopeful road?

Or will we lose heart and turn back because there is difficulty and challenge?

That, I believe, is the real question.

The past five years, I know, have been years of turmoil and movement and controversy. And too often, in the heat of controversy, we have forgotten just how much we have accomplished. But the accomplishments are there -- and they are a great cause for pride in every American's heart.

In the past five years, I have seen the results of those accomplishments.

-- I have seen a little Mexican-American boy named Pancho transformed from a sick and listless child to a bright, eager, happy youngster. A program called Head Start worked that transformation in him, and in hundreds of thousands of others.

-- I have heard a woman tell me that she was saved from financial bondage because a new government program -- Medicare -- covered the staggering expenses of her mother's last long illness. That program has touched the lives of 20 million other Older Americans.

-- I have seen, in the faces of hundreds of young Americans, hope -- where once there was only disappointment and frustration. Some of them are members of the Job Corps, the Neighborhood Youth Corps, and Upward Bound. Others benefit from programs like VISTA and the Teacher Corps.

-- I have visited campuses and learned that more than one quarter of all college students -- 1 1/2 million -- are being helped in their education by their government.

All these things that I have seen are the results of programs which are young, and experimental -- and vital. None of them is yet perfect. But if they survive and grow and improve, they will mean a fuller life for many, many people who were born with the odds stacked against them. And they will mean a better country for all the rest of us.

But let us make no mistake about it. These programs were not easily achieved -- and they will not be easily protected.

If the opposition wins in November, will they see their victory as a mandate to turn back: to end all these beginnings -- to bring down the curtain on a time of energy and movement and compassion in America?

I believe that would be a tragedy.

Hope and progress and compassion can be kept alive in America; they can prevail in the future we hope to build. All this can happen -- if we choose in November the man who himself symbolizes hope and energy and compassion. His name is Hubert Humphrey.

I will vote for Hubert Humphrey -- because I know him to be a leader of enormous intelligence and creativity. The stamp of his vision and labor is upon most of the truly progressive programs of recent years: Medicare, The Peace Corps, the Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, and Civil Rights. Programs to help every American family. All these are his enduring contributions to America. His opponents can claim not one achievement of this magnitude.

He was building support for justice and human dignity in America in a time when many people didn't even ^{recognize} there was a problem -- and when others were resisting its solution, just as they are today.

I will vote for Hubert Humphrey because I know his character. I have known him as Senator -- he and my husband were sworn in on the same day in 1949 -- as a Senate Leader, as Vice President, and as a warm personal friend.

I know him as a strong and compassionate man -- a man of deep personal convictions, and yet of great personal tolerance.

He is without vindictiveness and bitter hatred. He is a builder -- a unifier -- who does not try to set American against American. He does not pander to the fears in the souls of our people. He calls on the best that is in us -- the affirming spirit, the spirit of fellow-feeling, the spirit of hope.

I will vote for Hubert Humphrey, too, because he chose as his running mate a man of candor, and integrity, and broad understanding: Ed Muskie. The tragic history of recent years has taught us that the Vice President must be a man of Presidential timber, a man of unquestioned strength and wisdom. We simply must have someone in that office on whose judgment we can depend. Ed Muskie is such a man.

I will vote for Hubert Humphrey because his wife, Muriel, shares his deep sense of public responsibility. She took one of life's cruelest blows -- the birth of a grandchild who was mentally retarded -- and translated it into help for all those who bear that handicap.

I will vote for Hubert Humphrey.

But between now and the day I vote for him, I will do more -- and I urge you to do the same: to work for him actively and with high hearts. To me, the real definition of a good citizen is one to whom no task is too large and none too small. Many small acts can make a big victory. I will write to my friends -- stressing the urgency of the issues in this campaign. I hope you will do the same.

I will telephone my friends and ask them to spread the word about the choice we face. I hope you will do the same. I will work to get out the vote in my community -- to see that every young mother and every shut-in somehow overcomes the problem of getting to the polls. When the choice is so important, I can think of no excuse for any citizen to neglect his right -- and his duty -- to vote.

When I cast my vote, I will be thinking of a scene which caught my eye in Washington a day or two ago.

At a stoplight, I saw a group of schoolchildren waiting to cross the street. The smallest of them could not have been more than six years old. His clothes were neat and clean, but a bit worn -- clearly hand-me-downs from some older brother. That little boy carried in his hand a briefcase almost as large as he was. And on the briefcase he had pasted a red, white and blue bumper sticker. He was proclaiming to the world his choice, and perhaps his family's choice, for the highest office in the land. His candidate was Vice President Hubert Humphrey. I thought of all the programs for which Hubert Humphrey had fought in the past four years, and which are now part of that little boy's present and future: The Elementary Education Act;

Head Start; the Housing Act; the Higher Education Act. I thought of the steadily growing prosperity of these years -- which affects every home in America.

That little boy cannot vote. But I can vote. And as I vote, I will be in a real sense the steward of his hopes, the steward of his future.

For that little boy's future and my family's future are really bound together. His life and my grandson's life may someday touch. They live in the same world.

What will that boy's future hold?

I do not know the answer. But I do know that I hold part of the answer in my hands. I know that my vote in this election could mean hope or indifference for that little city boy. Or for a coal miner's son in Kentucky. Or for a farmer's child in the Mid-West. Or for millions of American families who are depending upon us for a better chance, a richer opportunity, a brighter future in America.

For my own part I know who offers the best chance for such a future.

I believe you know too.

So let us go out now -- to win the victory in that good cause: the campaign of two leaders, Hubert Humphrey and Ed Muskie,

Thank you.

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