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REMARKS

by

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DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE

at the

COLORADO STATE YOUNG DEMOCRATS CONVENTION

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I am delighted and thrilled to have this opportunity to bring greetings, greetings from the Democratic National Committee and our Chairman, John M. Bailey.

You are the young people who are going to influence the course of history and hopefully build a better America and a peaceful world. In my view, there is no better way to start than to organize yourselves, as you have, as young Democrats and consider seriously the issues of our time.

I don't have to remind anyone here that this is a troubled moment in our history. Our time seems to be out of joint and we live in a worried world. We have our troubles Abroad and a crisis at our doorstep.

Three weeks ago we lost a great world leader at the hands of an assassin. Anger and bitterness hang like a pall of smoke over the country.

Despite all this gloom and doom -- despite all the angry rhetoric -- I feel optimistic. I believe the facts indicate we are moving -- however much we might be stumbling -- toward a better day. I do not wish to misrepresent the facts. I don't want to be like the upper-crust lady who was proud of her family and decided to have a book written about her ancestry. In the research it was discovered that one of her grandfathers died in the electric chair in Sing Sing Prison. The author covered this in incident as follows: "One of her grandfathers occupied the chair of applied electricity at one of America's best known institutions. He was very much attached to the position and literally died in harness."

As you know, my chief concern has been for a long time with the problems and status of the Black minority. We have worked in the ghettos

of America in the interest of the Democratic Party which, in my view, offers the most promising political route to the advancement of Negroes. Indeed, our party offers the most promising political programs for meeting basic human needs of all Americans -- for black and white alike.

A decade ago the Negro minority and the problems of Black America were little understood, and they did not disturb the minds of the majority of Americans. Today this represents the Number 1 domestic issue.

Some critics on the national scene who view our present situation with despair are busily placing blame. They condemn the civil rights movement which got underway in the 60s. They condemn the Democratic Administration of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson for their approaches to the problem. They call the 60s the "explosive and revolutionary" decade.

The ugly fact is, however, that for eight long years under Republican rule during the 50s, the whole issue of race relations and racial justice was swept under the rug. Indeed, the Supreme Court Decision of 1954 which outlawed the jim crow concept of "separate but equal" in education fell upon deaf ears in "official" Washington. The neglect of the 50s helped to fuel and feed the revolution of the 60s.

Placing blame, however, may be irrelevant today. I want to discuss some of my reasons for hope and to seek your support in the days ahead.

On July 27, 1967 President Lyndon B. Johnson said "...The only genuine, long-range solution for what has happened lies in an attack -- mounted at every level -- upon the conditions that breed violence and despair. All of us know what those conditions are: ignorance, discrimination, slums, poverty, disease, not enough jobs. We should attack those conditions -- not because we are frightened by conflict, but because we are fired by conscience."

If you examine the Administration approaches to the problem you will discover several basic concepts at work. For the deprived and powerless black minority two of the most important concepts were embodied in legislation, the Anti-poverty Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Bill of 1965.

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It is said that there are two tools -- two instrumentalities -- which every group in our society has used to gain prestige and power. One is represented by the dollar bill, economic power, and the other is represented by the ballot -- political power. Indeed, dollars and ballots are the bootstraps without which no group can be expected to lift itself in our society.

We know that not enough money has been appropriated by Congress for the war on poverty. We know that some of the anti-poverty programs, which were experimental, have not fulfilled their promise. We know that mistakes have been made. Nevertheless, for the first time in history our government has made a serious effort to abolish poverty in America.

Today I believe most Americans will agree that we can no longer accept or tolerate the poisoned swampholes of abject poverty in the middle of the green valleys and rolling hills of our affluent and prosperous country. The validity of the concept for providing the tools of economic power to all Americans is self-evident.

The impact of the economic thrust of this Administration can be seen in the report on the "Social and Economic Conditions of Negroes in the United States" issued last October by the Department of Labor. I quote: "The incidence of poverty among non-white families remains high, with about one out of three classified as poor. Still, just six years ago one out of two of the non-white families were poor. Last year the number of non-whites in poverty was reduced by 151,000 families." The report also points out that outside the Southern Region, the percentage of Negro families with incomes of \$7,000 or more rises to 38 percent. The tragedy, of course, is that every effort to step up this progress is fought tooth and nail by Republicans who then charge we promise more than we produce.

A dramatic and hopeful development can be shown in the impact of the 1965 Voting Rights Act in the South and in the new political ferment among Negroes in the North. The ballot like the dollar bill is a tool of enormous power.

Just four years ago at the Atlantic City Convention, the political plight of the Negroes of Mississippi made the headlines. The few Negroes registered in the State literally took their lives in their hands when they sought to vote.

Today 22 Negroes have been elected to public office in Mississippi, whereas only 26,000 Blacks were registered in the State in 1964, over 250,000 will go to the polls in November 1968. Out of the 7 million Negroes in the nation who will be eligible to vote in 1968, 3 million of them will be voting in the 11 States of the Old Confederacy. Today close to 300 Negroes hold elective offices in the Old South and 23 are in State legislatures -- 11 in Georgia, 6 in Tennessee, 3 in Texas and one each in Mississippi, Virginia and Louisiana. The impact of the new Negro voting in the South is bound to influence changes in the southern representation in the Congress. Some of the old coalitions are certain to be affected.

Incidentally, the new Negro sheriff of Macon County, Alabama, Lucius Amerson, at a recent conference in Washington remarked that the sheriffs control the election machinery in the deep South and that he was not about to change the system. I read recently also that Sheriff Amerson arrested a white policeman in Alabama. If that isn't Black Power -- I don't know what it is.

The political ferment in the South has been matched to some degree by the rise of a new breed of Negro politicians in the North. They have new goals and new horizons and like Mayors Carl Stokes of Cleveland and Richard Hatcher of Gary, Indiana, their ambitions are going beyond the confines of the Negro ghetto.

The encouraging political developments North and South have special significance for us because all of these new elected Negro officials are Democrats. They support and strengthen the Democratic Party. Of the 600 Negroes holding elective offices in the nation, over 500 are Democrats.

Along with these developments on the state and local political front, President Lyndon Johnson has opened the door of the national government for Negroes for the first time in history. There is now Negro representation on the Supreme Court, Thurgood Marshall in the Cabinet, Bob Weaver on the Federal Reserve Board, Dr. Andrew Brimmer. President Johnson named more Negro Federal Judges in one day than all the Republican Presidents combined.

These black beach-heads in every department of the Federal Government permit us to say for the first time in our history that there is no appointive position in the national government which is barred to a citizen because of his race or color.

Now the question arises, why in this period of progress and dramatic changes on the economic and political front, with doors opening all around us, do we have so much hatred and violence?

Part of the answer may be that up until recently, many Negroes did not believe dramatic progress was possible. The very success of the civil rights movement in the fight for the laws which now cover most of the abuses of civil rights, including the housing field, has escalated the demand for faster action.

You remember when the South's answer to the civil rights leaders' demand for change was -- "Never, never, never." Yet, dramatic changes came -- the Civil Rights Bill of 1964 opened up public accommodations and in the deep South Negroes began to walk through doors that had been closed for a century. The colleges of Mississippi and Alabama opened up despite the melodramatic efforts of the Governor to bar the door. In short, the Negro masses got the message that change was possible.

Part of the answer may also lie in the fact that white attitudes toward blacks have not greatly changed despite the lowering of some barriers. The stereotypes persist.

The black citizen still feels that he is scorned and regarded with contempt by white society even though he is standing taller and making progress. For the first time many Negroes see that anti-Negro prejudice and white racism remain almost as strong as ever despite the fact that the "white only" signs have come down and some barriers have fallen.

Dr. Martin Luther King understood this phenomenon. He preached non-violence but more fundamentally he called for brotherhood and love. He used to say that every white American is a little bit black and every black American is a little bit white. He was an apostle of love, love for all members of the human family with God as the father of us all.

It is the responsibility of the white citizen to help the black citizen to overcome the barriers of prejudice and to help the black citizen to overcome the barriers of poverty and to help the black citizen to overcome the barriers of ignorance.

I believe that you young Democrats can make a contribution on many levels to help resolve the racial crisis that challenges us today. I know you will play your part in making certain that the Democratic Party will continue to give leadership and remain responsive to the basic human needs of all Americans.

Some of you who have been in the poverty stricken ghettos and the rural wastelands of America know what I mean by "basic human needs." You know what hunger, disease and rat-infested housing can do to the human spirit. Our party, under the leadership of President Johnson, has begun the attack on the crippling blight of our cities and you must make certain that there is no retreat from this war in the years ahead.

For the first time in America, youth is making its voice heard and its power felt. We have left behind, finally and dramatically, the concept that young people have nothing to contribute to our society and our institutions. Youth power is a reality today. What you do with this power is important to the future of this nation.

I believe that you are in a unique position to help change racial attitudes in our country. You can easily cast aside the old racial stereotypes and racial myths which have been the legacy from past generations.

Perhaps you can launch a people to people program here in America as we have tried to do Abroad. It is a supreme tragedy that despite all the modern means of communication, blacks and whites in our society really do not know, do not understand and do not communicate with one another.

It seems to me that in the circle of friends of every white American there should be some blacks and in the circle of friends of every black American there should be some whites.

I do not believe the extremists when they say that friendship is impossible across the color line. Dr. Martin Luther King did not believe it either.

You have in your hands the future of America, black hands and white hands. In the words of the anthem of the civil rights movement which Martin Luther King taught America to sing -- "black and white together, black and white together -- someday, someday we shall overcome."