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STATEMENT TO THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL PLATFORM COMMITTEE

by

Jesse M. Unruh
Chairman of the California Delegation

This statement is intended to express both specific approaches which I think may be helpful in solving some of the problems confronting us, and general observations based upon the principles which have been historically identified with our Party. The statement is not intended to be comprehensive.

I will begin with an expression of my concern with our involvement in Vietnam. This may seem unusual for a state legislator, and I have been criticized editorially in my state for expressing myself on this subject.

To argue simplistically, all citizens should be concerned about a war in which their nation is involved. I would refine that argument somewhat by saying that all politicians should devote whatever skill they possess to the search for the peaceful alternative -- the political settlement, if you will -- to our deepening involvement in Southeast Asia.

Immediate U. S. Peace Initiatives

The negotiations with North Vietnam in Paris drag on with no visible sign of progress. Our young men and the people of Vietnam pay the price

of this impasse in the coin of human life. Clearly, one side or the other must take the initiative and hold out some reason to hope that a peace can be negotiated. I believe that we must take that initiative.

Several steps suggest themselves. For example, we should declare flatly and unequivocally that we will accept a freely elected coalition government in South Vietnam which includes the National Liberation Front. To be sure, the NLF is deserving of the world's condemnation for its free and easy use of terror and violence, but we must also bear in mind that the normal channels of political activity are now closed to them.

We keep saying that we do not seek a military victory in Vietnam but only a political solution. Surely, then, we must offer the other side some hope of achieving its goals through peaceful means -- through the political process.

But tragically, it may already be too late for any statement of American intent to be effective. There have been so many misstatements -- so many attempts to mislead -- that today we must act if we are to be believed.

Within twenty-four hours of President Johnson's announcement of the limitation of the bombing of North Vietnam last March 31, the bombing raids, though limited in range, were increased in number and intensity. There seemed to be a clear conflict between what the President had said and what our commanders in the field were doing.

And although we continue this intensified bombing, the rate of infiltration into the South increases. World opinion condemns us both for

duplicity and brutality.

We need no more words now. We need no more promises or demands for reciprocity. We need simply to stop unconditionally and immediately all bombing of North Vietnam. Neither our safety nor our honor are involved in continuing the bombing. Cessation has the political advantage of indicating our willingness to negotiate. With one stroke we can shift the focus of the world's impatience for peace upon Hanoi and save American and Asian lives.

A Proposal for American Military Disengagement

There remains the extremely difficult task of "de-Americanizing" the war in Vietnam. Our intervention in the war is out of all proportion to any reasonable self-interest we may have in Vietnam. The argument that American boys should not be doing what Asian boys should be doing is as politically popular today as it was four years ago. However, most of the time when this argument is made, detailed recommendations for implementing it are lacking. It is a specific proposal for disengaging our troops upon which I will concentrate here.

At the present time there are approximately 525,000 U.S. troops fighting in Vietnam. Many of these troops are stationed in the countryside engaged in the "search and destroy" missions which have as their objective the killing of as many of the enemy as possible. Without discussing the military value of these missions, one can reasonably question whether

this should be the role of American troops.

The troops of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), while also charged with killing the enemy, are primarily concerned with the protection of the cities and hamlets and carrying out the so-called pacification program. This is a relatively safer mission as shown by comparative casualty figures which have consistently shown greater U.S. casualties in recent months in spite of a larger number of ARVN troops under arms.

As a result of the fact of greater military activity in the countryside than in the cities, a dramatic shift of population in South Vietnam has occurred. In three years, the urban population has at least doubled and perhaps tripled. A tremendous exodus of the rural areas is taking place because of the violence of life in the countryside, and the Vietcong are altering their priorities to the population shift as dramatically demonstrated by the Tet Offensive of February, 1968.

As Harvard's Samuel P. Huntington wrote in last month's Foreign Affairs magazine:

The full significance of the Tet Offensive becomes clear against this background . . . The war in Vietnam is a war for the control of the population. If the Vietcong are to compete effectively with the Government, they must be able to assert their power in the cities.

What I propose, then, is a scheduled disengagement of American troops from military activity in the rural countryside and their replacement by ARVN troops. We would tell the government of South Vietnam that by a specific date we would pull back our troops from a specified area and that

full military responsibility for the area would henceforth be theirs. The replacement of troops could take place all at once or in mutually acceptable stages. The American military would have as its prime mission the security of the large civilian population centers.

This, of course, is similar to the enclave policy proposed by General Gavin early in 1966 with certain exceptions. Under this plan, we would recognize our responsibility to those who were forced by the destruction and violence in the countryside to flee to the cities. Therefore, we would not limit our security efforts to coastal cities as suggested by General Gavin, but would include inland cities also.

One of the first and most important results of this change in U. S. strategy would be a substantial reduction in American casualties as an effect of eliminating the search and destroy missions and the need for holding strategic but vulnerable positions such as Khesan.

Concentrating our troops in urban areas would greatly simplify our logistical problems and greatly reduce the amount of territory we must secure. This would make possible a significant reduction in the number of American troops in Vietnam. At the full term of this plan, we could expect to have reduced the number of U. S. troops by half. Because of the effect of the troops upon Vietnamese society, both social and economic, the number of troops should be held to a minimum as a matter of policy.

Again, all of this would be done in stages with the full knowledge of the South Vietnamese Government. We would also continue to upgrade the

military capability of the ARVN. As their well-equipped military forces undertook "clear and hold" operations in areas of the countryside, we would have the first real test of whether the government is capable of protecting its people and commanding their loyalty.

I would expect that this change in U. S. policy would eventually produce a South Vietnam in which the urban areas were relatively secure and under the political control of the government. The situation in the countryside would remain at least as fluid as it is now for some time, but eventually this situation would stabilize, too, with the Vietcong controlling certain defined areas and the government controlling others. This could set the scene for a realistic and enforceable cease-fire.

A New Statement of Objectives

Whatever form our military disengagement in Vietnam may take, we must have the humility to recognize and learn from the mistaken assumptions that have been used to justify the drastic escalation of this war over the last few years. We have been told that we are protecting South Vietnam from an external aggressor. We have been told of the "domino theory" which states that if South Vietnam falls, each of our SEATO Allies, one by one, will fall victim to aggression. And we have even been warned of the "yellow peril" -- the Asian hordes that will engulf the world if we do not hold the line in Vietnam.

We have been severely limited by these definitions of our reasons for being in Vietnam. If the problem is stated in these frightening terms,

and in these terms only, then nothing but a military solution seems possible. But the reality is that our massive military effort in Vietnam has not produced victory and there is no indication that it will. The specters conjured up by our policymakers to explain past escalations remain to haunt us.

If we turn instead to the political dimension of the problem we are much closer to a solution. We can state our objective positively and honorably, not in the words of the soldier, but in those of the politician: Our purpose is to provide an environment in which all the people of South Vietnam can participate in the construction of those institutions which lead to an orderly, developed society.

The State Role in the Problems of the Cities

The crisis in our cities here at home has been described at length. We are all painfully aware of the magnitude and urgency of the problem. The principal contribution I can make to this discussion, I think, is to suggest that we have neglected a promising approach to the solution of urban problems.

My general criticism of our present approach is that the domestic programs of the central government over the last thirty years have become so pervasive and so dominant that other problem solving resources are discouraged and even prevented from creating and implementing solutions. Much recent federal legislation reveals a general lack of confidence that

state and local governments can respond to the needs of their citizens.

The fact is, of course, that federal laws are passed by one group of politicians and state and local laws by other groups of politicians. I don't think any group has a corner on compassion or brains. The main difference is usually in their distances from the problems.

My reason for making these comments is that I believe a study of the federal role in urban affairs is desperately needed. Some of the recent federal programs dealing with health, education, welfare, housing and other urban problems have not been very effective, have often been contradictory, and -- although I am sure they were well motivated -- have at times even intensified the very problems they purported to solve.

The question that is almost never asked when these programs are considered is, who should control and direct this effort to meet urban needs?

When we speak of urban needs we are not, unfortunately, speaking of the needs of any one, clearly identifiable level of government. I am sure you need no explanation from me of our problems of municipal organization, overlapping jurisdictions, transportation, the organization of delivery systems for various services. Clearly we must go beyond the local level to solve problems of such scope, but we need not turn to a complete dependence on the federal government. In my opinion, the states are ideally suited to the task.

On the whole the states have a much better picture of urban problems and their cross-jurisdictional implications than the federal government does.

And I cannot overemphasize the importance of this point. An intimate knowledge of local conditions is essential to the design and operation of successful programs.

The state is also in a much better position to operate programs effectively. Federal administrators tend to develop uniform regulations and guidelines on a national basis, whether or not they are best for a particular situation. California cities differ from eastern cities and a single set of rules designed to satisfy the varying conditions of both usually serves neither very well. But the state has the needed flexibility.

In addition, the state is in a prime position to insure a more equitable redistribution of income which, as we all recognize, is at the heart of urban problems. Only the state -- because of its control over both property taxes and the income tax -- can insure that the surrounding suburban communities pay their share of the cost of rehabilitating urban slum areas.

State property tax policy will have a substantial impact on the future of any rehabilitated area.

If the phrase "Creative Federalism" is ever to be anything more than an empty slogan, it must mean the shared control of these programs and the opportunity for initiative at all levels of government. Although we tend to speak of our problems in terms of how much it will cost to solve them, I think we should understand that our real need is to make more and better thinking available in finding solutions. State and local governments must be free to fulfill the role envisioned for them by this nation's founders -- "laboratories of the federal system".

We have promised much to the people of our cities. We have produced an atmosphere of rising expectations among the poor. We must deliver on those promises soon with a massive mobilization of the knowledge and resources of government at every level.

Law Enforcement and the Community

This nation is learning the terrible cost of neglect of the central cities, and the lessons are given with dreadful regularity every summer. This year, the Kerner Commission warned us of nothing less than the possibility of another civil war. Two armed camps -- one white, one black -- face each other. The sale of hand guns, rifles and shotguns skyrockets in our cities, and suburban housewives now attend gun clinics as casually as they used to go to cooking classes.

Between the two armed camps stand our law enforcement agencies. They deserve the best training, equipment and salaries we can provide. We must also make a special effort to help our police bridge the gulf in understanding between them and the black community. The fact is that if the police and the minority community cannot come to know and respect each other, there will be little to prevent the two armed camps from conflict.

In California we have passed legislation establishing a pilot program of special training for selected law enforcement officers which includes neighborhood problems, characteristics and values, on-going field work with community leaders in the ghetto community and interchange of the information and ideas obtained in the ghetto with other law enforcement

agencies.

This is surely not a total answer. It may prove to be irrelevant to communities in other states. But what we must recognize here is that the need for police-minority understanding is urgent. As the President's Riot Commission observed, the riot outbreaks were invariably triggered by "routine arrests of Negroes for minor offenses by white police."

The Law and the Poor

The call for "law and order" which we hear so often today is nothing more than a thinly veiled shout of hostility if it is not accompanied by a cry for just and equitable laws. If anyone doubts that inequitable laws do exist in this nation where all men are supposed to be equal before the law, I would refer him to that vast body of statutes, regulations and inter-office memos known as the welfare system, or more properly, the medieval "poor laws" of our affluent society.

We have no constitutional provision for second-class citizenship, but we have second-class citizens. I do not speak here of any racial or ethnic minority. This second-class citizenship occurs with a perverse kind of equality. The denial of full citizenship is part of the high cost of being poor, and being poor is not restricted to any special group.

Although we have abolished the poorhouse of bricks and mortar, we have not abolished the state of mind that the poorhouse represented. We have simply transferred the poorhouse to the inner city. As a society, we continue to say to the poor, "Keep out of sight and we'll buy you off."

The United States, and California in particular, have made significant efforts toward narrowing the gap between the poor and the rest of society. This can be seen in the decentralization of large state and county institutions and in the virtual elimination of the idea of charity as a reward for those who are "worthy". But our laws have not kept pace with our enlightenment. The poor are still prevented by law from participating in the mainstream of our society. The time for a fundamental change is long overdue.

It is true that virtually every segment of society, the rich, middle-class, and poor -- the welfare recipients themselves -- all are profoundly discontented with the present system. Theoreticians representing the entire political spectrum are advocating new approaches to the elimination of poverty and the reduction of dependency.

The guaranteed minimum income or negative income tax, for example, bears no ideological stripe. It is advocated by liberals, like the staff of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions and by conservatives like Milton Friedman of the University of Chicago.

Taxpayers understandably resent bearing the cost of public dependency when there is little evidence that present programs are meeting their objectives. And there are public officials who exploit that resentment with talk of eliminating inefficiencies, usually welfare fraud, but whose other actions effectively serve to entrench the present, unbusinesslike, unsuccessful welfare establishment.

Worst of all is the approach, motivated by a warped understanding of the problem of poverty, that seeks to reduce costs by attacking the very victims of the present system, the poor. Let me cite as a specific example the approach taken by Congress last year when it limited the number of AFDC recipients to their present percentages in the several states thus denying not only the needs of children, but the facts of life all in the name of economy.

Clearly, it is in the area of welfare administration that real economies can be achieved, and there are many ways to do it. It may be possible, for instance, to integrate welfare payments with the state or federal income tax which would shift a lot of the bookkeeping responsibility from social workers to those trained for it.

Of course, the real cost of welfare administration is maintaining conformity to myriad regulations which are the poor laws of our time. It seems to me that the question we should be asking is whether this system is extracting too high a price from the poor and whether it is achieving the goals we want it to attain. And we should ask these questions not only in the name of economy, but in the name of humanity.

We talk a great deal these days about the danger inherent in the masses of aimless, unemployed young men in our ghettos. The fact is that these young men are not helped at all by our present system. They are not on welfare because there is no category for them. They are not eligible for unemployment insurance and they never have been.

A large number of them never even show up in census figures, although we know they are there. For all our record keeping and forms and regulations, we cannot even reach those we have decided that it is absolutely essential to reach.

The fact is all too easily forgotten that the poor are citizens with full rights and privileges and that we have systematically denied them first class citizenship because they are poor.

The forms that welfare recipients must fill out surely violate their right to privacy. And we have seen where the erosion of that right has led -- to the midnight raids on the homes of the poor to turn up cases of immorality. We cannot continue this subtle erosion of the rights of the poor without making it obvious that they do not enjoy equality before the law and that they are not, after all, in a position to compete in our society.

Even the assumption that a person in need of financial assistance necessarily requires certain social services, while stemming undoubtedly from the noblest of motives, tends to demean the recipient and place the burden of change upon him rather than on society. And this happens even if his dependency is no fault of his own. After all, the old, the blind, the disabled and the deserted usually have no choice. If they had, can you imagine them not choosing it?

Each welfare dollar extracts its pound of flesh, and it is usually unnecessary that this be the case. Let me illustrate this by contrasting two widows both of whom depend upon government for their livelihoods,

but who receive it under different systems.

One widow receives social security. She is not considered an unfit mother, a fraud, or promiscuous, nor is she pressed to leave her children and take a job. These are precisely the demands we make of the widow on public assistance, however.

If the widow receiving social security remarries, she continues to receive support for her children. The widow on welfare loses her benefits upon remarriage since our poor laws demand that the stepfather support the children even though our general law recognizes no such obligation.

As a matter of fact, there is very little likelihood that the welfare widow will remarry since our poor laws even go so far as to demand that any man with whom she associates has an obligation to the family.

I think it is time we began to scrap this entire, absurd structure of punitive and demeaning regulation which has grown up in our welfare system layer upon layer, year after year. I find it impossible to believe that the vast majority of recipients are glad to be on welfare. I have a fundamental conviction that the vast majority of people from all walks of American life want very much to be respected and to be considered valuable to their fellow citizens and to themselves.

Toward Greater Involvement in the Democratic Process

The poor comprise only one of the alienated groups in our society. There is another, more articulate, constantly growing group which we can

no longer afford to ignore. I refer to our young people.

Their activism enrages some and bewilders a many more, but I believe that we should welcome it. There is a very real need for the participation of youth in finding the solutions to the great problems which affect their lives with such dramatic impact. How can they get a grip on the fast-moving train of events which is carrying them swiftly toward personal responsibility, opportunity, danger, even violent death?

Throughout our history, we have insisted that freedom can best be achieved through representative government and majority rule. We have gradually extended the voting franchise to more and more of our adult population because we believe that government can be representative only if those being governed can participate in its processes and the right to vote is the great symbol of participation in a democracy.

I support lowering the voting age to eighteen, and I believe that this should be the policy of the Democratic Party. My reason for taking this position is not based on what I consider to be the specious argument that if you are old enough to fight and die for your country, you are old enough to vote. On that basis, logic would dictate that we extend the franchise to the canine corps.

For government to be representative, it must be accessible to participation by more than a bare majority of its citizens. As the younger age group becomes proportionately larger in our population, we are rapidly approaching a condition of government by minority because nearly half our

citizens will be below the age of twenty-one.

We must provide creative channels for the energies and concerns of our young people if we do not want to turn our greatest natural resource into our biggest national headache. Voting alone will be no means accomplish all these glittering results, but it is a symbol of our serious intention to respond to the young people among us and to welcome their involvement in the democratic process.

To continue in this spirit of wider involvement in democracy, I would recommend the adoption of some form of national presidential primary. The time may well have come when presidential politics is too important to be left to the politicians.

Let me suggest how such a national primary might be held. Each state desiring to do so would hold its presidential preferential primary on the same day nationwide. It would, of course, be most desirable if all states would cooperate, but I doubt that this should be federally mandated. Instead, the federal government could defray the costs of administering the elections as an incentive to the states.

Each party's ballot in each of these elections would list the names of all bona fide candidates recognized as such by the mass media. Furthermore, a substantial number of the delegates to the national convention would be elected with their candidate in the primary.

Finally, all delegates from these primary states would be required to stay with the winner of the primary at the convention for at least two

ballots or for as long as he commands at least one-third of the convention vote.

This plan, or something similar would meet the crying need to give the American people a greater sense of participation in the selection of their president, and it has the virtue of accomplishing it without doing extreme violence to the traditional political apparatus we have become used to.

There are, of course, many other urgent issues facing us to which I have not addressed myself here. We must find a way to provide dignified, useful employment to that ever growing group of unskilled, untrained workers among us. We must provide educational opportunity in the inner city that is at least equal to that provided in the suburbs. We must find a way and develop the public's desire to stop the steady putrefaction of our environment that steadily poisons the air we breathe and the water we drink.

No one expects this platform to contain the solutions to all the problems confronting mankind. Many of us, however, expect this platform to speak for those in our society who have had no voice until now. We expect it to express meaningful compassion for the poor, the old, the sick, the under-educated, the black, the brown, the red man -- all the victims of indifference and hatred among us. We expect this platform to be a means of communication between the people and the seats of power. After all, that has always been the purpose of our party.

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