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PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 79th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

My Views On the Present Discharge Policies of the Army and Navy

SPEECH

OF

HON. MIKE MANSFIELD

OF MONTANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 17, 1945

Mr. MANSFIELD of Montana. Mr. Chairman, I want at this time to call to the attention of the Congress my views on the present discharge policies of the Army and the Navy. For the past month I have been urging the Secretaries of the Army and Navy to outline a definite discharge policy whereby the men in the services can be discharged at the earliest practical moment. I am not interested in estimates for a year from now, but I am interested in getting as many men and women out of the services just as soon as it is humanly possible to do so. I want to see married men and men with dependents discharged and given an opportunity to make a decent livelihood in civilian life. I want to see men who have served two and more years given an opportunity to be discharged now. I want to see everything possible done to allow boys, who had their schooling interrupted to go to war, now to be able to go back to school. I want to see men with businesses allowed to return to them and once again take up their peacetime pursuits. I want to see American prisoners of war, who have been in Japanese and German prison camps and who are now waiting for points to pile up, given their release immediately. I want to see the Army and Navy release doctors so that these practitioners can return to the communities where they are needed now. I want to see the men and women who have performed their

jobs overseas returned home at the earliest possible moment.

Now that General MacArthur has stated that all our citizen soldiers in the Pacific can be demobilized in 6 months and that Japan can be garrisoned for occupation purposes by 200,000 regular Army men, I feel that it is up to General Eisenhower and the War Department to tell us our actual needs for occupying Germany. There will be no reason, then, why we cannot formulate a definite policy now as to the number of men we will need, and thereby release all the rest at the earliest possible moment.

I see no need for an 8,000,000 Army and 3,000,000 Navy now that the war is over and certainly it will not take that many—or anywhere near that many—to occupy Japan and Germany. I think the Chinese and Filipinos should make up a proportionate share of the occupation forces in Japan. I do not think we need to retain our forces in China and Korea, and therefore I urge that they be withdrawn at the earliest moment, and these countries given an opportunity to look after their own internal affairs. I urge also that our soldiers and sailors be withdrawn, except for occupation purposes from all overseas places except those areas needed for our security and the maintenance of peace. This should be done at once. Furthermore I do not see the need for all these separation centers now being set up, as the soldiers can be discharged from the camps at which they are stationed and the sailors from the ships they are serving on. Every camp that is maintained just for appearances or just to keep a division or a school activated should be liquidated and restoration of the Army to its proposed peacetime size should be accomplished at once. Surplus officers and enlisted personnel should be discharged immediately and

the point systems as such should be lowered drastically. This is no time to quibble over this very serious situation. The time for action is now, and if the services do not see fit to rapidly speed up the discharge rate, then the Congress will have to enact legislation to that effect. The hardest thing today is to get action on the part of the armed forces to reduce their personnel at a more rapid and desirable rate.

At least 6,000,000 men should be released by the Army within the next 6 months and 2,500,000 men should be released by the Navy in the same period. With the war over these men are not needed now. They have performed their duty well during an extremely perilous period in our Nation's history and they should be allowed to return to their families, businesses, and responsibilities now. In my considerate judgment their further retention in the services is absolutely unjustifiable. If something is not done to rectify the present discharge policies, many of these men will become problems. I know how these men feel, because in the last war I was in their boots, and the hundreds of letters which I am receiving now are ample proof that the situation is just as bad as it was in 1919 and 1920. This matter is so important that I have waited for this legislative day, when we are discussing the Armed Forces Voluntary Recruitment Act of 1945 to bring it to your attention. The entire House membership is in attendance to consider this military legislation and I urge all of you to join with me in my efforts to accentuate the discharge rate of men from the armed forces. That is the most important factor now and I feel that Congress, which ordered the induction of these men, should now do everything in its power to get them released from the service.