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### Spuds and Sputnicks

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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Senator Mike Mansfield (D-Montana)

Spuds and Sputniks

A friend of mine said to me recently: "The people back home are more concerned with spuds than they are with sputniks." It was his way of pointing to the economic recession which has been spreading through the nation and to the fact that it is beginning to take precedence over foreign policy questions in people's minds.

The man happened to be talking about people in Montana. He might just as well have had in mind people in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Oregon, Maine or a dozen other states. To date, the recession, has hit hardest at mining, timbering and heavy industrial areas. Its effects, however, are felt throughout the nation.

We shall not gain anything by wringing our hands in despair over this situation. Neither shall we gain anything by whistling in the dark. The important thing is for the Administration to take an honest look at where the nation's economy stands and to do something constructive about it.

That is what has not yet been done. The Administration is still waiting and hoping for things to get better instead of acting to make them better. It is all very well to hope for an upturn, but in the meantime the recession has ~~already~~ produced anxiety and suffering in the nation. Millions of families have felt its effects in unemployment, declining take-home pay, and disappearing profits.

It has resulted in the loss to the nation of hundreds of millions of hours of productive labor that can never be recouped. It has cost millions of tons of steel, millions of feet of timber, millions of pounds of copper, refrigerators, automobiles and washing machines. All



of these and countless other products could have been added to the nation's supply in the past few months. With industries shut down or on short schedules, they were simply not produced. As a result, prices stay high or go higher in the face of shrinking demand.

These effects of the recession are close at hand. They are readily seen by anyone who has not been blinded by his own irresponsible optimism. What is not so apparent are the potential international implications of the recession. People at home cannot be expected to concentrate on long-range international problems when the installment collector is knocking at the door. The Administration's obvious concern with foreign/<sup>aid</sup> and reciprocal trade programs is not going to impress them very deeply when the same administration whistles off domestic economic problems.

Nor is that the only adverse international consequence of the recession. The free nations are now knit together in various defense and political arrangements to safeguard peace. We need these ties for our national security and we need them for the foreign trade they make possible. In 1957, for example, our exports amounted to almost \$20 billion, not an insignificant part of the national income. Moreover, while this trade is important to this country, it is a matter of desperate necessity to some of the nations that are closest to us. The United States is at the center of the complex free world trading relations. Any prolonged slump in this country will hit others many times harder than it hits us. It will jeopardize their free existence and propel them into a desperate rivalry for ~~trade~~ trade wherever they can find it. If that happens, what will be the impact on the defense



and political arrangements which sustain freedom in the world? With people abroad as with people at home, spuds are likely to become more important than sputniks. In short, any prolonged slump in this country is bound to wreck havoc with the position of ~~the United States~~ *the United States* and freedom in the world.