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### An American Initiative for Peace

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For Release Monday A.M.'s, June 2, 1958

AN AMERICAN INITIATIVE FOR PEACE

Commencement Address by Senator Mike Mansfield  
Eastern Montana College of Education  
Billings, Montana

Sunday, June 1, 1958, 8:15 P.M.

It is a tradition on occasions of this kind to congratulate the graduates upon the successful completion of the college-phase of their education--the Commencement of your lives. In keeping with the tradition and from the bottom of my heart, I extend my sincerest congratulations to you, the men and women of the Class of 1958.

In keeping with tradition, I might also ask you to look back with me now, in nostalgia, over the years through which you have just passed. And in keeping with tradition, I might also ask you to look ahead with me to the opportunities which await you in the future.

I shall not hold closely to these other traditions today. Even though we are gathered in a warm and friendly association, I believe that each graduate today is partly alone in his or her thoughts of the years just completed and in his or her thoughts of the years ahead. I shall not intrude upon the privacy of those thoughts. They belong to you and to you alone.

I shall, instead, talk with you of something which we do share. I shall talk to you of a common concern with the significance of your graduation and all graduations this year, to the nation. I shall talk with you, not of what the nation promises you in the years ahead but rather of what the nation needs of you in the years ahead.

For those who seek an easy time of it, I am afraid 1958 is not the best year for graduation. For those of you, however, who have the desire to give of yourselves, for those of you who have a willingness to help meet the nation's urgent requirements, it is a magnificent year in which to graduate.

You graduate at a time when the nation is in great need of attributes which, while they may be found at any age, are particularly the attributes of young men and women. The nation needs fresh and vital viewpoints on the many problems which beset us within our borders and in the world. It needs a new enthusiasm, a new courage to face these problems and to try to meet them.

These problems of which I speak are not unknown to you. They are as familiar and as numerous as the newspaper headlines. One day, it is the state of the nation's schools. The next, it is the implications of a Russian Sputnik for American science. The next, it is a flood on an uncontrolled river, or drought where there need not be drought. The next, it is unemployment in Butte or Detroit and the rising cost of living. The next, it is an outburst of rioting in New York or Little Rock. And the next, it is violence in Latin America or Lebanon or a crisis in France.

The problems which we read about in the press are as extensive as the world and as varied as human beings are themselves. I think that their significance to us, however, can be stated in the form of two great challenges.

In an attempt to get clear what these challenges to the nation are, let us ask ourselves two questions in the language of that much neglected subject of mathematics. First, let us ask ourselves, what is the common denominator in unemployment, in rising prices, in a race riot, in a dam that

is needed and is not built, in inadequate educational facilities, in a lag in scientific development, in high crime rates and so forth? The common denominator in these varied problems is that they are all expressions of the unfinished homework of the nation. They are all expressions of the first of the two great challenges of our times, the challenge which confronts us at home--the challenge to us to keep this nation unified, to build its economic, political and social institutions ever stronger, to keep open in this generation, as in the generations that have gone before, the promise of expanding opportunity and progress in freedom, for all Americans.

Let us ask ourselves, next, what is the common denominator in a crisis in France, trouble in the Lebanon and the unfortunate demonstrations against the Vice-President in Latin America which took place recently? The common denominator in these situations is that they are all expressions of one basic problem, the problem of building a more stable peace in the world. They are reminders that peace, this hope, indeed, this most urgent necessity of mankind is still far from being assured. That, then, is the second great challenge which faces the nation now and for the years ahead. It is the challenge to build with other nations a more stable peace. It is a challenge to get mankind off the precipice of the unspeakable disaster of war in the nuclear age.

These two great challenges--the challenge to keep the nation strong, unified and progressive at home and the challenge to build a more stable peace in the world cannot be placed in separate compartments. We cannot deal with one and with the other as though there were no relationship between them. We must deal with both, at the same time, because the two challenges are inseparably tied together.

Let me try to explain why this is so. Peace is not something which comes to the world automatically. If it could be had for the wishing, we would not have been plunged into two World Wars and then into the Korean conflict. Peace depends upon what nations do or fail to do in their relations with one another. The larger and more powerful a nation, the more important it is to peace, what that nation does or does not do.

A nation's capacity to contribute to peace, however, depends almost entirely on its inner strength, on its inner unity and its inner progressiveness. If the nation is weak, if there is serious dissension among large groups of its citizens, if it looks backward at the world as it was yesterday, instead of the world as it is today and as it will probably be tomorrow, its voice will count for little even though it may be raised for peace. No matter how great the efforts of the President and the Secretary of State for peace, these efforts cannot carry much more weight than the unity, the strength and vitality of the nation which stands behind them.

By the same token, it will profit us little to build this nation strong, unified and vital, if we ignore, at the same time, the responsibilities of building a more stable and peaceful world. This nation does not live in a vacuum. It is one nation among many and we cannot shut ourselves off, insulate ourselves against what happens elsewhere.

Even if that were possible, could we look with equanimity to the day when a war abroad would leave this nation standing alone, unscathed, in a world which otherwise lay in smoking ruins at our feet? Grim as it is, that is probably not an accurate picture of what would happen if the

plague of war were again to strike the earth. I am afraid that in this day and age of missiles and nuclear bombs, no matter how we tried to avoid it, this nation could not escape a third and, perhaps, final Armageddon which involved all other nations.

I see no alternative, then, but to face the two great challenges of our times. We must work with patience but with determination within our borders to strengthen the nation. We must work soberly and unceasingly, beyond our borders, to strengthen the peace of the world.

Let me emphasize, if I may, that the strength of the nation is a many-sided thing. To be sure the condition of the nation's economy is a factor in its strength, but national strength is many factors. To be sure, military forces and the advanced weapons at their disposal is a factor but national strength is many factors. When we think, then, of the state of the nation's strength let us think of more than its armies, navy and air force, its factories and farms. Let us think, too, of the calibre of the nation's citizens. For national strength, in a basic sense, is the sum total of their unity, their courage, their intelligence, their alertness, their creativeness and inventiveness, and their industriousness. And it is beyond all else, the vitality of their ideals. Our national strength is, in short, the willingness and capacity of Americans to work to translate our ideals of human freedom, human equality, human compassion and human progress into a vital living practice. How well we do that will determine how well we meet the first great challenge of our times; the challenge to keep the nation inwardly strong, unified and progressive.

It will also have much to do with our capacity to meet the second great challenge of our times, the challenge to build a stable peace in the world. Once before in the memory of most of the older people here we were faced with this challenge. It was shortly before many of you graduates were born. Then, too, the war clouds were gathering about us. Then, too, the nation's voice was lifted for peace but it went unheeded. We were unable to act for peace because the strength of this land lay wasting in the great depression. We were unable to act because the gap between our ideals and the living practice was vast and it was filled with an idle cynicism and despair. The ideals of freedom were derided by totalitarians abroad because we ourselves and others who believed in freedom, were so uncertain of them ourselves.

We are not now in the same situation that existed before World War II. The reservoirs of national strength are far from exhausted but the warning flags are flying and we shall do well to heed them. I need hardly remind you that we are in an economic recession. This slump weakens the nation inwardly and, in so doing, tends to dim the hope for a more stable peace. It has been suggested of late that we are hitting the bottom of the recession. If that is so, it is all to the good but it is not enough. It is not enough merely to drift along on the bottom and not to go lower. This country can and must have an economy of continuous growth, a dynamic economy which, as it grows, will unfold endless opportunities to absorb the energies and talents of this graduating class throughout the nation and of the classes which will follow in the years ahead. It must be able to absorb these energies and talents in constructive work and not in war.

We need that kind of an economy for the inner strength of the nation. We need it if the nation is to play a full part in building a stable peace in the world.

In the same fashion, we need to be a nation which does not accept, complacently, the highest crime rates in the world, low standards of physical fitness and staggering levels of mental illness such as we now have, a nation which does not accept these evidences of inner social weakness as permanent characteristics of our society. We need, too, a nation which does not neglect the heart and structure of continued progress in freedom, the educational system. We need, finally, a nation which does not accept as permanently inevitable, bars to equal human opportunity, to equal human dignity and equal freedom among its citizens.

What we require, in short, is a nation which faces the inner threats to its unity and strength with honesty and with courage. What we require, in short, is a nation which, while it understands that these weaknesses cannot be eliminated overnight, recognizes nevertheless that they must be dealt with, with consistent determination and with steadfast action.

These are some of the tasks arising from one of the two great challenges of our times: that is, the challenge to strengthen the nation inwardly. It is a challenge to all of us, including you men and women graduating today. The nation needs your courage, your honesty and the boldness of the vision of youth if it is to dispel its inner divisions and weaknesses. You can make your contribution in many ways, regardless of the direction in which your individual fortunes may lead. You can make



it best, perhaps, by living as closely as you are able, in accord with the ideals of this nation, as you have grown to understand them at this college.

With your help, with the help of the young people throughout the land, the nation will not falter. It will meet this challenge at home to preserve its unity, to build its institutions ever stronger and to keep open the promise of ever-expanding opportunity and progress in freedom. If we do that, I am confident that we shall be able to face and to meet the second great challenge which confronts us and, indeed, all nations. I speak now of the challenge to build a stable peace.

I am not given to raising alarms and that is not my intention today. Nevertheless, any man with a sense of responsibility to the people whom he represents, any man who has some knowledge of modern military weapons, any man who in travels abroad has looked as I have looked into the churning brew of preparation for war in many parts of the world, cannot regard with complacency or unconcern, the state of the world today.

A man who has thought about these problems at all cannot reach any conclusion other than that the world is drifting towards a monumental catastrophe. World War II killed tens of millions of people and laid waste huge segments of the earth. In that war, only so-called ordinary or conventional weapons were used except for the two small atomic bombs dropped on Japan toward the end. The Korean conflict, limited though it was, produced millions of casualties. For us, as for others, it meant deep bereavement for countless families and countless billions of dollars in the waste of war. And in Korea, men fought only with so-called ordinary weapons.

Those conflicts, violent and devastating though they were, were as child's play when compared with the one which awaits us if we fail to stop the present drift towards war. Perhaps I can at least indicate to you the dimensions of a future war by pointing out the problems involved in testing a single hydrogen bomb. To detonate just one of these nuclear explosives of latest model, in reasonable safety, it is necessary to clear about 400,000 square miles of the Pacific Ocean of all shipping. That is an area equal to three times the size of the state of Montana and that is for a single explosion.

These bombs are already in existence. Now, missiles are being rapidly perfected to deliver them over Montana from the United States to Russia or over Montana from Russia into the United States, at speeds reaching 15,000 miles an hour. This is not science fiction. This is scientific fact. It is the basic fact which makes the building of a more stable peace in the world the second great challenge of our times.

As I have already said, I am not given to raising alarms. Yet, I must say to you in all seriousness that the danger of an ultimate war is real and it is immediate. There are some optimists in Washington and elsewhere who believe that because the new weapons are so destructive, neither Russia nor the United States will permit war to descend upon the world. I wish I could share that optimism. Unfortunately, the idea has a familiar and tragic ring. We heard it before World War II, but war came nevertheless. We heard it before World War I, but war came nevertheless. I suspect mankind has been hearing the same thing almost since the beginning of civilized existence. Yet wars have always come.

I speak with the deepest conviction when I say that I believe we can prevent war. With the same conviction, however, I say that we will not prevent it by wishing for peace or by an optimistic assumption that war is too terrible to come. We shall prevent it only by unremitting efforts to keep it from coming.

As I see this problem, there are four principal sources of danger at the present time and it is to these sources which we must direct our efforts if we are to reduce the danger. We are in danger of an accidental war between Russia and the United States. The dangers grow out of the great complexity of modern military technology and the speed with which it can and must be brought into operation in the event of an act of aggression. When two nations are as keyed to instant conflict as are Russia and the United States, the possibility of a human or a mechanical error is always present in their military plans and operations. It will take only one significant error in the military establishment of either country to set an accidental conflict in motion. And it will matter little to a world reduced largely to ashes whether it was an American or a Russian error which was responsible for the catastrophe.

This, then, is the first problem of greater stability in the world. If there is going to be an American initiative for peace in this realm, more will be needed than the idea of instant and massive retaliation in the event of an attack. We need that, it is true, but we need something more. We need action which will make instant retaliation unnecessary. In short, we need action to make instant attack on us or on any nation unlikely. In short, we need a lessening of the tensions between the nations and, at the same time,

a practical approach to disarmament, an approach which will, step-by-step, provide increasing assurance to all nations against aggression. We need an approach which will, step-by-step, begin to restore a degree of mutual confidence among nations. I believe we have begun to move in this fashion but there is still a long way, a very long way to go.

If there is a danger of accidental war, at this time, there is also a danger of war beginning in Europe, the Middle East and in the Far East. In each of these great regions of the world there are numerous unsolved political problems. They may not be apparent to us here in Montana, except when they burst upon our conscience in a Hungarian uprising, in a Suez crisis, in violence in Lebanon, or a revolt in Indonesia. The basic unsolved problems are there, nevertheless, whether we are aware of them or not. They go on building pressures for conflict beneath the surface. As these pressures accumulate, they push the world ever closer to a great conflict, not a conflict tomorrow or the day after, perhaps, but an almost certain conflict. They do so because it has become almost impossible to isolate war to a particular region as was the case, perhaps for the last time, in Korea. The world has become so integrated in time and space, that a conflict anywhere could be the trigger which will fire conflict everywhere.

If we are to avoid involvement in a trigger-type war which may begin in Europe or the Middle East or the Far East, then action is required to reduce the likelihood of a local conflict in any of these regions, action which gets at the roots of the unsolved problems in these regions.

I have just recently completed a series of talks in the Senate in which I discussed these problems and possible ways of dealing with them.

I offered those thoughts as the beginnings of an American initiative for peace. I believe we must take that initiative. I believe we must try to build, not a peace of domination, not a peace of appeasement or surrender, but a rational peace which deals justly with the realities of the world, a peace with which decent people everywhere, in Russia, no less than in the United States, can live.

The process of building a durable peace, as I see it and as I have already said, is a step-by-step process. I do not think that we shall achieve peace by means of a summit conference about which you have been hearing so much lately. I doubt that there can be a successful summit peace decreed by a handful of the world's leaders. There will be a time, perhaps, for a summit conference on peace, but only when the groundwork for peace has been carefully laid. What I believe we must have, first, however, is a series of what might be called sub-summit or "half-way-up" conferences. It is in meetings such as these that the spadework for peace, if there is a will to peace, can be done. This spadework is the labor, not of the world's leaders at a ceremonial meeting, but of men who work day and night, week in and week out with the intricate complexities of the world's problems.

An American initiative for peace at this time requires that we call for quiet meetings, meetings without fanfare or big names between Russia and the United States at this time to consider the very real danger of accidental war. We must work to make the doctrine of instant and massive retaliation obsolete by making unlikely the danger of instant and massive attack by any nation on any other.

An American initiative for peace requires us, too, to encourage a conference of European nations--east and west--to consider Europe's inner problems of stability, a conference with the United States and Russia, for once, sitting on the sidelines instead of in front. An American initiative for peace requires us, further, to seek conferences of Middle Eastern nations, a conference of those in that region who may resort to arms to settle their difficulties and of the nations outside the region which supply them with the arms. An American initiative for peace requires us, finally, to call for discussions in the Far East, to determine whether a step back from the danger of war in Korea, Viet Nam, Formosa and elsewhere in Asia is possible.

In short, an American initiative for peace requires the pursuit of not one but several conferences--sub-summit, half-way-up conferences--before a full-dress ceremonial summit conference. It requires an American determination and willingness to act for peace on many fronts, as persistently as we waged war on many fronts, when circumstances required, in the defense of the nation.

This second great challenge to Americans, the challenge to build a more stable peace in the world will be with us for a long time. In meeting this challenge as in meeting the other--the building of the inner strength of the nation--we need the contribution of you men and women of the Class of 1958. I ask you to make that contribution by pouring your faith, your energy and your creative initiative into the continuing stream of American life. I ask you to join with other living Americans, in reaffirming as every generation must, the vitality of freedom in our country.