Speech by Mike Mansfield At Kingston Armory, Kingston, Pa.

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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REMARKS OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

at the

Kingston Armory, Kingston, Pennsylvania

Saturday, May 5, 1962, 6:30 p.m.

I have not come here to persuade you to do what you have already made up your minds to do. This gathering in May can only mean one thing in November. You are going to vote your confidence in President Kennedy and the Democratic Congress. You are going to do it by electing your dedicated Representative, Dan Flood, your outstanding Senator, Joe Clark and other members of our party.

As democrats, it is easy to vote for democrats. But I like to believe and I do believe that Democrats are moved by something more than passion for their party. I like to believe and I do believe that the Kennedy Administration, a Democratic Congress and the Democratic Party have something more to offer the people of the United States than a party label. I believe this nation has a democratic government in office because democrats offer a greater alertness to the problems of a changing nation in a changing world. We offer a vision of a finer future for all our citizens and we offer the energy and leadership to bring that vision to reality. We offer an administration that has begun to move this nation ahead again and has the determination to keep it moving.
Some of us are democrats because we like the sound of the name. Some of us are democrats because our fathers were democrats. But we are all democrats because we have the sense to see the world and the nation as it is. We are all democrats because we have the vision of a nation growing in the strength, in the unity, in the equality and in the vigour of all its people in the years and decades to come. We are all democrats because we are not prepared to stand pat. We are all Democrats because we would not turn back the clock even if we could.

Even in a partisan meeting of this kind, I think we have to recognize it is not only Democrats who can be described in these terms. There are others. But I do say that there is a significant difference between a Republican Administration and a Democratic Administration in Washington. I do say that there is a difference in a Republican-controlled and a Democratic-controlled Congress. I do say that any honest examination of the record of the 8 years of the previous Administration and the one year and several months of this Administration will reveal that difference. I do say that the principal difference lies in seeing today as it is and tomorrow as it is likely to be, of looking ahead rather than behind, of discerning what we have gained instead of bewailing what we have not really lost. I do say that on a whole range of domestic questions we have moved forward prudently and rapidly. I do say that there has been a redoubled effort to strengthen both our security and the prospects for peace in the world. I do say we have
made a beginning on meeting the accumulated social and economic needs of the people of the United States. As citizens, even more than as Democrats, we have a responsibility to invite all Americans, of whatever inclination, to vote their confidence in this advance by their choices in the November election.

You are entitled to know, the people of this state and the nation are entitled to know, some of the principal facts about this advance. Let's start with unemployment. I don't have to tell you anymore than I have to tell the people of my own state about this problem. The mines everywhere have been particularly hard hit by it. This area, if I am not mistaken is in the 10% plus bracket in unemployment. Nation-wide we have several millions out of work. That has been the situation, a little better, a little worse, for many years.

Now, Republicans, no less than Democrats, know that it is not good for a man to be out of work and without resources. It is not good for the man, his family or the nation. Where, then, is the difference? The difference is that this Administration believes there is a public responsibility to do something about this difficulty and accepts that responsibility. The difference is that this Administration recognizes that no man will ever be really secure in his own work unless all men and women who are able and willing to work can find work. The difference is that this Administration does not hide its concern behind glowing statistics
of progress which have no meaning for the man without a job or the man whose job doesn’t pay enough for a minimum livelihood, or the man about to lose his job in the very process of progress. This Administration does not take refuge in the hope that vague, so-called natural economic forces will act to overcome these difficulties. It asks what becomes of the man in the meantime? A question like that can only be answered by action and this Administration and a Democratic Congress have acted. We have acted to extend unemployment compensation insurance. We have provided aid to the dependents of the unemployed. We have increased minimum wages.

Yet, this Administration recognizes that these measures are largely in the nature of a stop-gap. These measures relieve the immediate adverse effects of unemployment but they do not get at the heart of the problem. And it is at the heart of the problem of unemployment that we are aiming. Democrats aspire to an America in which all Americans of all ages who want to work will never know the fear or the actuality of being out of work through no fault of their own. We have a long way to go. This challenge is not going to be met overnight, in a month, in a year. But I can assure you of one thing: I know that the President, a democratic Congress and the democratic party are not going to rest content until it is met. We have made a beginning about which you in this community have some first-hand knowledge. Your Congressman was a key figure in the Area Redevelopment Act. He drove for the Flood-Douglas bill in the House,
just as Joe Clark fought for it in the Senate. The President, I believe, singled out this area of Pennsylvania as the number one depressed region of the nation and if I am not mistaken Luzerne County received the first federal grant under the program.

I know that that is the kind of honor every section of this country wishes that it did not have to have. But the way to end a difficulty is to face it and to act on it. You have seen the beginning of action on depressed areas, thanks to a democratic President and a democratic Congress and you will see more action. You will see it in the Manpower Training Act which the Congress has recently passed. If we are not going to leave areas in permanent depression, we most certainly are not going to leave men and women to stagnate in the backwash of rapidly changing patterns of industry, and in the increasing bypass of the unskilled or surplus skilled by the spread of automation. This administration has begun to probe in depth, for the first time, the full implications of that word automation. The President has labeled it the foremost challenge of our times and set the best brains he can find to work on it.

Automation is a challenge which is as full of promise in the long run as it is ominous in the short run. As Democrats, we are determined that the benefits of this great advance—and it is a great advance—will be spread throughout the population and not just to a few. We are determined that the sacrifices, the human price of this advance, and, there is a heavy human price—will be borne by all and not just the man or woman who labors for a livelihood.
There are other fields in which this Administration is trying and will continue to try to move the nation forward. In housing, we have acted and we will continue to act to the end that decent shelter will be within the reach of all. In the extension and improvement of the highways and airways we have acted and will continue to act to meet today's urgencies and to anticipate the needs of tomorrow. In developing the great natural resources of this country, in improving the supplies of water through pollution control, in setting aside large areas of our natural heritage of forest, river and coast for the recreation of the people, we have acted to meet the needs of today and tomorrow and we will continue to act. In encouraging small business and helping to improve its competitive position we have acted and will continue to act because we believe small business is the leaven which keeps the economy of the nation flexible, creative and growing.

Insofar as big business and big labor are concerned, the actions of both have a profound effect on the stability and orderly growth of the nation's economy. This Administration has no quarrel with either. Nor will there be any quarrel, so long as both—not one or the other but both—fulfill their responsibilities, not only to their stockholders or their members but to the nation. The President is determined that these responsibilities shall be met. I think we all now have a pretty clear idea that he is going to do whatever he can to see that they are met.
Still ahead of us is the challenge to improve the educational structure of this nation from top to bottom. We will not rest content until every boy and girl has an opportunity to be schooled, in excellence, to the limits of their capacity and ambition, regardless of where they may happen to be born and regardless of family financial conditions. This improvement is essential to the security and continued progress of the nation. It is basic to the achievement of all the ideals which are our common heritage.

Ahead of us, too, is the battle for decent hospitalization and related care for the older citizens of this nation. It is not that the other party does not recognize that people get old and get sick and frequently need expensive care which millions cannot afford. I do not know of anyone in public life who does not recognize at least some of these common facts. The difference is that this Administration and the Democratic Party are determined to do what must be done to see to it that all older citizens get that care as a matter of right and not as a matter of charity, that they get it by public insurance, by social security and not by chance or charity. We are determined that they get it not as a reluctant handout but with the dignity befitting Americans. And we are running into a familiar resistance in trying to get it. We are in the same old battle of the 1930's, with the same arguments which were advanced then by some who professed their sympathy for the old people but then voted against
the social security retirement insurance program. Yet, who would change social security now? Who would stop the flow of those hard-earned monthly retirement cheques? Who would suggest that we shift this successful system of retirement insurance to hundreds of private insurance companies? Who would want to force millions of older citizens to go back to the good old days before Social Security? I can tell you that this Administration has no intention of going back to those days. This Administration is determined to move further away from them. It is determined to extend social security retirement insurance to cover hospitalization and related care to all older Americans. And, may I say that we would welcome an assist from Republicans in Congress. What we have gotten so far is a confusion of the question by the addition of catch words like socialized medicine and private insurance. But you know and I know that the present social security system works and has worked for almost a quarter of a century. A system of hospitalization for older people, built, essentially, around the same social security approach can work just as well. That is what the President wants and that is what the Democratic Leadership is going to try to get. When this issue reaches a climax—as it will in the near future—bear in mind that just about everybody is likely to be for hospital aid for the older folks. But the real issue is going to be the social security approach that is tried and proven as against money-making schemes of hospitalization, labeled private but paid for by the government, which means by you—schemes which might or might not prove effective.
These are some of the facts that the voters of this state and the nation are entitled to have. These are the domestic issues—the common sense issues—which we have got to face as a nation. Republicans in general stand on one side of them. Democrats in general stand on the other. And I do not have to tell you which is which.

Clearly, each issue does not affect every citizen in the same way. A man out of work worries more about unemployment than a bank president. Families whose income permits them to pay for a first-class education for their children on up through business school, an engineering degree, medical school or law school or whatever may not be so directly concerned with the condition of the educational establishment of the nation. Pennsylvanians may be too busy thinking about their own situation to worry about unemployment in Montana. New Yorkers have so many urban problems that they can't be expected to be concerned about the desperate need for irrigation in rural parts of California.

But let us never forget—Pennsylvanians, Montanans, New Yorkers or Californians—that we are one nation. And what strengthens any part of this nation in the long run strengthens the whole. What hurts any part of the nation, if it is ignored by the rest, sooner or later hurts us all. We will either stand together in common sacrifice for the advance of all Americans, for the common benefit, or we will, sooner or later, pay separately the price of selfishness, drift, neglect and sectionalism.
In no other place will this price be higher than in its impact on this nation's place in the world. The arena of international relations is the entire globe. Even now, it is an arena which is expanding to encompass the moon and the planets. In this vast arena, the struggle for peace and for national security is a far more complex affair than all of the domestic challenges put together. This is no place for quick and quack solutions. This is the place for sobriety, for caution, and for a respect for the immensity of the difficulties. This is the place for a steadfast courage and a calm wisdom. This is the place for sober recognition of the tremendous necessity of all peoples for a more stable peace. This is the place for the glint of a deep knowledge and a deep compassion as well as for the glint of steel.

This Administration is not building from scratch in foreign policy. It is building on what has gone before because foreign policy does not stop when one administration ends and another begins. An administration inherits, in foreign policy, all the mistakes as well as all the achievements of the administrations which have preceded it. In this matter, former President Eisenhower and other Republicans deserve full credit for their contribution because when it comes to foreign policy, we are not and ought not to be either Democrats first or Republicans first but Americans first and foremost.
It is not easy to shift gears in foreign policy. It will take time before the effects of changes in foreign relations are felt under this Administration. It will not be easy to bring changes about. It will not be cheap. Foreign aid will have to go on. Tens of billions of dollars will continue to be spent each year for the armed forces. Billions more will go into space exploration.

The President does not enjoy spending this money, as we have been doing for years, anymore than you like to have it come out of your earnings. But that is the price of cold war, of the world's fears and anxieties. It is the price of the survival of freedom and the integrity of this nation in a time of world-wide upheaval, uncertainty, aggression and hostility. I can assure you that if any man can lead in the modification of this situation, if any man has the wit and wisdom to lead in the creation of a more stable world situation, a more durable peace, it is the President of the United States, John F. Kennedy. He will need the understanding, patience and support of all the American people and if I know the people of this nation, he is going to get it.

Even now, he is acting to rebuild our neglected relations in Latin America, to hold the line in Asia, to try to come to some sort of sensible agreement to end atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons without danger to national security, and to defuse the perilous situation in Berlin. And last, but not least, he is attempting to bring a great enlargement in our international trade—in order that the resources of
farm, mine and factory which we have in such abundance can be sold abroad in return for what we can use from abroad. Some people will be hurt for awhile in this process but this Administration is not going to let them bear the brunt of change which is of benefit to the entire nation. This Administration wants to proceed carefully and with understanding and with special consideration for those who might be temporarily hurt. But we have all got to face the fact that we can't sell abroad if we are not ready to buy from abroad. We have all got to face the fact that international trade is now an integral part of our hope for economic stability and advance in the years to come. We will realize this hope only as we are able to expand both our buying and selling with other nations.

I have tried to give you a picture of what your democratic party has done and is trying to do in Washington. Take that picture to the voters in November. Take it to them in all honesty for we need have no fear of the people if they understand it in all honesty. Take it to them and they will put men in office, democrats in office, democrats who will work with a mind of their own, with something to contribute themselves and at the same time in close cooperation with the President for the benefit of the entire nation and all its citizens.