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Democratic Women - Washington, D.C.

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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RESPONSE OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

at the

Gala Dinner of Democratic Women

Sheraton Park Hotel, Washington, D. C.

Monday, May 21, 1962, 7:30 p.m.

This is the first time I have ever been introduced at a public
gathering by my wife. It is a novel experience. It is also a most de-
lightful and exhilarating experience.

I had no idea, until just a moment ago, that Mrs. Mansfield
thought so highly of me.

First, let me congratulate the originators of this unusual
procedure. In its ingenuity, it approaches some of the "far out" ways
of doing things in the Senate.

Next, let me thank those who were responsible for the procedure.
It has produced an immensely valuable result. It has extracted from my
wife an unprecedented public expression of admiration for me.

I have no intention of forgetting what has been said here,
tonight, in the presence of so many witnesses.

And I can assure you that I do not intend to permit Mrs. Mansfield
to forget it either. Her words this evening provide an irrefutable response
to future complaints about the late hours I keep in the Senate.
I must confess that there is one aspect of the procedure of introduction, tonight, which intrigues me. When the members of the kitchen cabinet presented their husbands, these distinguished Secretaries rose. And like good secretaries or wives, they took their dictation, smiled and sat down again. They spoke not a word.

I am most curious to know how this silent sequence was achieved. And may I add that as Majority Leader of the Senate my curiosity is not an idle one. The parliamentary procedure by which the Secretaries were silenced was most daring and unusual. It may have precedence in the House of Representatives. But nothing like it, to the best of my knowledge, has ever taken place in the Senate.

A Senator never gets to his feet unless he has something to say. And once he begins to say it, it is not easy to get him to sit down again.

Of course, there is, as you know, a device of silence in the Senate which is called cloture. You will note that cloture was successfully invoked against the Secretaries tonight. You will also note that no attempt was made to invoke it against me. I can only conclude, that the Majority Leaders of tonight's affair decided that it would be easy enough to use it against uninitiated Secretaries of the Cabinet but that it would be futile to try it against a Senator. But if Senators do not yield readily to cloture, sometimes they do accept a limitation of debate.
I am prepared to do that tonight. I just want to say that the organization and enthusiasm of this gathering tonight augurs well for the party in November. We have an Administration which is leading this nation and leading it well. Over a whole range of public issues, we have a record of exceptional achievement in the short time the Democratic Administration has been in office. We have, in the messages of the President which have yet to be acted on, a blueprint for the achievements which lie ahead.

The nation is moving again. It is moving towards new standards of scientific achievement, of social welfare and service and of economic progress. It is moving towards a new sense of cultural values, towards new concepts of human dignity and equality, towards a new unity, towards a new enlightenment.

We are moving again. We are moving because we have had exceptional leadership from an exceptional Democratic President and because we have had a Democratic Congress and a nation which is responsive to a leadership of excellence.

It may be a long long time from May to September. But it is not so long from May to November. In the months ahead our party responsibility will be to clarify for the people of the United States what has been achieved in a short period of democratic administration and what remains to be achieved. The Congressional elections which are coming are, in a sense, a public test of the course upon which we have embarked and on which
we are determined to continue. Meetings which reveal the dedication and enthusiasm of the party, as this one does tonight, give us every reason to believe that the test will result in an overwhelming vote of confidence in the Democratic President, the Democratic Congress and the Democratic Party.

"In the words of our great leader, President John F. Kennedy, "let us begin" now."