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REMARKS OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

American Good Government Society

Sheraton Park Hotel, Washington, D. C.

Thursday, April 30, 1964, 7:00 p.m.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

May I, first, compliment the American Good Government Society on its wise procedure. By selecting two recipients of the George Washington Award--a Republican and a Democrat--the Society underscores a reality of American life, sometimes overlooked in an election year. Neither political party has a monopoly on ability for public service or on dedicated patriotism. We can never have too much of these attributes in the government of the United States.

Having said that, I should also like to compliment the Society on its perspicacious choice of the Republican recipient for this year's award. In my judgment, you have managed, without the aid of a New Hampshire primary or an Illinois or California primary, to select the outstanding exponent of Republicanism in the nation today. Everett McKinley Dirksen is a great American and a great leader and he is as solidly Republican as his middle name.

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I have known Senator Dirksen for many years. I have known him as a personal friend as well as a legislative colleague. The Senate is one of the great institutions of the nation. But the Senate functions, on occasion, in bizarre and almost incomprehensible ways, as you have undoubtedly noticed in connection with the current debate on civil rights. I am frank to admit that one of the strangest aberrations in Senate behavior is that the institution can get along without a Majority Leader, but it cannot possibly function without a Minority Leader. Moreover, he must be a Minority Leader of exceptional tact, forbearance and cooperativeness, a Minority Leader willing to put the basic operation of the Senate above all considerations of party.

May I say that I accepted the designation of Majority Leader, three years ago, secure in the knowledge that there would be a Minority Leader with these characteristics. I knew that I could depend on Senator Dirksen to make the Senate work.

I have known Senator Dirksen, too, as the leader of the Republican opposition. It does not denigrate from Senator Dirksen, the friend and colleague, to note that Senator Dirksen, the Republican opponent, is a thorn in my side. He fights for his Republican beliefs with the tenacity of the lion, with the greatest oratorical skills in the Senate and with an immense wit and parliamentary dexterity. On only one occasion in recent times has he found himself flabbergasted

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in a partisan sense. That was when President Johnson, without warning, usurped the Republican claim to an exclusive concern for parsimony in government by turning out the lights in the White House. For once Senator Dirksen was speechless. But his equanimity was promptly restored when a spend-thrift Democratic-controlled Senate burned the lights longer in the Capitol in order to accommodate what is euphemistically called a prolonged debate on civil rights.

I have known Senator Dirksen, finally, beyond personal friendship, legislative kinship and partisan rivalry as a great American. I have known him not only as a man who responds to the needs of his constituency and to the needs of his party. I have known him, as a man who, at the same time, has the wisdom and the integrity, the compassionate humanity, and the courage to look to the needs of the entire nation in this generation and in the generations yet to come.

When the issues transcend party or region, and involve the fundamental precepts of the American Constitution--as they do in civil rights--when they touch upon the survival of the nation and its future--as they did in the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty--in short, at the decisive moments, the Senator from Illinois is a tower of national strength. On these occasions, there is no partisanship, no sectionalism in Senator Dirksen. There is only a profound reason and a dedicated patriotism enshrined in a man of deeply human experience.

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The late President Kennedy met regularly each week with the Democratic leadership of the Congress and President Johnson does the same. But when the great national issues arose, Mr. Kennedy met with Everett McKinley Dirksen and Mr. Johnson does the same. That is indicative of the caliber of the man and the trust which all who know him repose in him.