

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews

Mike Mansfield Papers

9-8-1966

Metcalfe Campaign Kick Off - Stevensville

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Mansfield, Mike 1903-2001, "Metcalfe Campaign Kick Off - Stevensville" (1966). *Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews*. 632.

https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches/632

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Mike Mansfield Papers at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

parent reversal to religious training. All the sponsors of these various proposals are genuinely concerned with the growing deemphasis of religion in our modern society. When the topic of casual conversation is whether "God is dead," the concern is real—and the remedy must be appropriate.

As I read the first amendment to the Constitution, it says in nonlawyer language that the Government—Federal, State, or local—shall keep out of the field of religion. I consider this prohibition as wise today as it was 180 years ago. I think the Supreme Court was merely enforcing this "no trespassing" sign when it forbade the reading of a State-composed prayer or a passage from a Bible in a public school. Those of us who believe strongly in the consolation of prayer and the wisdom of the teachings of the Bible cannot understand how anyone could fail to appreciate the redeeming value of these practices. But we must not forget that our beliefs are personal and free—and this freedom is also extended by our Constitution to the non-believer.

When President Kennedy was asked to comment on the Supreme Court's prohibition of the New York regents prayer he said:

We have in this case a very easy remedy, and that is to pray ourselves. And I would think that it would be a welcome reminder to every American family that we can pray a good deal more at home, we can attend our churches with a good deal more fidelity, and we can make the true meaning of prayer much more important in the lives of all our children.

I agree fully with this statement of our late President. The manner of worship must be the free choice of the person; it is a personal and family responsibility that should not be surrendered to any public body. With the daily problems of society becoming more complex and the government at various levels taking a more active role in so many facets of our daily lives, I think it imperative that we protect fully and without exception the free and personal choice of religion and emphasize the responsibility of the person and the family in these matters of delicate choice. We must do nothing to upset the neutrality of government in religion; and it is clear to me that with the authoritative position of government in the State public school system, this neutrality can be maintained only by a policy of abstention. I think that anything less would render a body blow to the proven American doctrine of the separation of church and state.

One's religious practice is a response to the individual conscience; it is too personal, too sacred, too private to be influenced by pressures for change each time a new school board is elected to office.

I support the first amendment as it now exists. I believe that we should continue to separate all manners of worship from the public schoolroom; I strongly believe that we should preserve our public academic institutions from a function they cannot justify—a function that could be destructive of their purpose.

Finally, I agree that a period set aside for silent meditation in a public school-

room would not abuse the personal choice of prayer or the private nature of worship. I believe such is fully consistent with the first amendment. I urge all Members to give serious thought to any proposal that seeks to change any of our Bill of Rights. I hope that, after serious consideration, you will agree that the remedy for irreligion in our society is in the home—not in the Congress.

Mr. BAYH. Mr. President, will the Senator yield me 5 minutes?

Mr. MANSFIELD. I yield 5 minutes.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I yield myself 5 minutes.

Mr. President, since June 1962, when the Supreme Court prohibited the State of New York from composing and prescribing a prayer for recitation in its public schools, there have been about 200 resolutions introduced in the Congress in an attempt to remedy this ap-