Hanoi on their Proposal for Cease Fires Christmas and Easter

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001
December 27, 1965

Honorable Clinton P. Anderson
Chairman, Committee on Aeronautical and Space Sciences
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The great volume of legislation which has been enacted during the past few years has set in motion new federal programs which have been designed to correspond to the nation’s changing needs. There comes to mind, for example, such measures as medical care for the aged, expanded health research, programs for curbing water and air pollution and for safeguarding the natural heritage of America, the effort to insure equality of treatment of all citizens, the acts which seek to deal with urban blight and unrest and the decay of vast rural areas and the many programs for the improvement of education.

So much basic legislation was enacted in the 86th and 87th Congresses that I do not anticipate requests for steeping new legislative approaches in the 90th Congress. That is not to say that all that confronts us in the session ahead will be the need to pass appropriation bills and then adjourn. It occurs to me that the next Congress will also see the convergence of a unique opportunity with a great need for a concentrated Senate exercise of the oversight function.

I would hope to see, in the first session of the 90th Congress, the beginning of a major re-examination of what we have done in legislation during the past few years. Considering the vast scope of this work and the unprecedented nature of much of it, it is to be expected that there exists a number of rough edges, over-extensions and overlaps and, perhaps, even significant gaps. A thorough and dispassionate re-study of this legislation, therefore, could lead to desirable refinements.

What applies to programs which we have set in motion in recent years, in my judgment, applies with equal emphasis to those of older vintage. There comes to mind, in this connection, legislation on the military draft, agricultural subsidies of one kind or another, foreign aid, income and other taxes and many others. For if any of these earlier legislative structures have had a thorough-going, second-look for many years. These, too, it seems to me, might profitably be subject to complete re-study by the Senate. That kind of study could provide not only a basis for adjustments of legislation, as necessary, to the current needs of the nation but also a check on the equity and efficiency of the administrative interpretations and practices which have developed.
In short, what is suggested is that the Committee Chairman consult with the members of their committees to determine with respect to matters within their committee jurisdiction that, in their judgment, might be most usefully subjected to a thorough-going oversight at this time. To put it another way, I am suggesting that committees initiate on behalf of the Senate a concentrated re-examination of major legislative structures by which the federal government is enabled to play its role in the current life and affairs of the nation and the world. I do not anticipate much more than a beginning during the coming session. But the time seems to me to be very ripe for such a beginning.

May I take note, in closing, of some recent references to Viet Nam as though that were the only reason for a Congressional "stop-and-look" at this time. Insofar as I am concerned, the problems which confront us at home and abroad are no less problems because of the serious demands on our resources for Viet Nam. Nor is there any less need for efficient and effective government action, adequately but not wastefully financed, to meet those problems. With or without Viet Nam, in my judgment, the Senate of the United States, through its committees, would have a responsibility for beginning the kind of top-to-bottom oversight which is suggested herein.

With all best wishes for the coming year and warm personal regards,

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Mike Mansfield

same letter sent to Committee Chairman:

Senator Clinton P. Anderson
Senator Allen J. Ellender
Senator Carl Hayden
Senator Richard B. Russell
Senator John J. Sparkman
Senator Warren G. Magnuson
Senator Alan Bible
Senator Russell B. Long
Senator J. W. Fulbright
Senator John L. McClellan
Senator Henry M. Jackson

Senator James O. Eastland
Senator Lister Hill
Senator A. S. Mike Monroney
Senator Jennings Randolph
Senator B. Everett Jordan
Senator John O. Pastore