Congressional Record S. 3409-12 - Meet the Press

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001
next half century to new heights of service for God and Country.

SENATOR MANSFIELD INTERVIEWED ON "MEET THE PRESS"

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have a transcript of a television show in which I participated, "Meet the Press," be printed at this point in the Record.

There being no objection, the transcript was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

MEET THE PRESS, MARCH 30, 1969
Produced by Lawrence E. Spivak.
Guest: Senator Mike Mansfield (D. Mont.).
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate.
Moderator: Bill Monroe.
Panel: William Thes, Hearst newspapers; Samuel Shaffer, Newsweek; John W. Finney, New York Times; Lawrence E. Spivak, permanent panel member.

Mr. MONROE. Our guest today on "Meet the Press" is Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, Majority Leader of the United States Senate since 1961. Senator Mansfield is a member of the Foreign Relations Committee and the Appropriations Committee.

We will have the first questions now from Lawrence E. Spivak, Permanent Member of the "Meet the Press" panel.

Mr. SPIVAK. Senator Mansfield, tomorrow will be exactly a year since President Johnson took himself out of the race for the Presidency and stopped the bombing in order to speed negotiations for peace.

Do you think we have made any significant progress towards peace?

Senator MANSFIELD. No, not of any significance. The only significant factor that I am aware of is the statement made by President Thieu the other day that he would be willing to meet with the NLF, the political arm of the Viet Cong, and also at the same time in which he stated that he did not believe that the bombing of the North should be resumed.

Mr. SPIVAK. Have you any reason to believe that the Administration's secret negotiations are being more productive towards peace than the public negotiations suggest?

Senator MANSFIELD. Yes, indeed. How much I am not aware, but some progress has been made in that direction. How much I cannot say.

Mr. SPIVAK. Do you have any hope that we will get a peace treaty before the end of '69?

Senator MANSFIELD. Well, I would hope so. I think we have got to make every effort and we ought to get away from this act-react syndrome that has been developing in Vietnam since the President's announcement of a year ago, and most especially since the stopping of the bombing around the first of November last year.

Mr. SPIVAK. Senator, some members of Congress, including you have been pressing President Nixon for a new American initiative for peace in Vietnam. Are there many new initiatives available to him, really?

Senator MANSFIELD. None of any real consequence, because with the passage of time, with the duration of the war, his options have decreased as had President Johnson's before him, but it does appear to me that what is necessary is a move like that suggested by President Thieu by means of which the NLF and the Saigon government will get together because they are both South Vietnamese and if there is going to be peace in Vietnam, its got to be between those two elements which reside in that country.
I think it is proper that the U.S. and Hanoi get together and try and work out questions of the taking of American prisoners of war. As far as you know, has this plan been tried and failed? Is it quietly being put into effect?

Senator Mansfield. I have no idea what it is.

Mr. Shafer. Senator Mansfield, one short follow-up on the question asked by Mr. Spyvak, on the record, the secret agreement for ending the war. Have you or any other Congressional leader been given an inkling of that plan by the President?

Senator Mansfield. No, and I dont think we should. If he wants privacy, he should have it. This matter is going to be concluded not in public, not by telling too many members of the Congress but by his negotiators getting into contact in a room or someplace.

Mr. Spyvak. Senator Mansfield, how do you assess the overt prominence by the Senate at this time concerning deescalation of the ABM system? Would this be only a mental gesture?

Senator Mansfield. I am personally being doing this, even though my prejudice is counter-productive to the objective desired.

Mr. Shafer. Senator Mansfield, how would you suggest by that that the United States bears a share of the responsibility for the recent escalation of the military activities in Vietnam?

Senator Mansfield. Oh, yes, because it is my understanding that once the bombing of the North stopped completely—that is, below the 20th parallel—then General Abrams to keep the pressure on. When you do that, they will come back and you have to face it. It is my further understanding that within ten days of the stopping of the bombing of the North that a number of the Vietnamese agreements withdraw into Cambodia and Laos. Maybe that was the time—of course, this is only that I might have been able to develop a situation which would have called for a standstill, which would have been helpful, in my opinion, to the negotiations at Paris.

Mr. Spyvak. Senator Mansfield, the Communist shelling of Saigon and other cities continues. I believe there were some more rockets, today, into Saigon.

If this continues, would you countenance a military force into Cambodia, or Laos, as the Senate has been asked to, to knock out the Communist bases, there, and you think Prince Sihanouk, for example, would go along, as has been suggested in some reports?

Senator Mansfield. No, I would not countenance such a move and I don’t think Norodom Sihanouk would go along. It would mean an invasion of his country, it would very likely mean the entrance into the war of Cambodia and instead of trying to bring about a deescalation and a possible peace, I think the war would be enlarged, more Americans would die and a difficult situation made more dangerous.

Mr. Thieu. You have maintained rather personal contacts with Prince Sihanouk and that whole area. Do you have any personal doubt that Cambodia is being used by the North Vietnamese to go as a way station, a military way station?

Senator Mansfield. No, I have no doubt that both Cambodia and Laos are being used, but I do not think the way to bring about an end to this barbaric situation is to try through an invasion of the Kingdom of Cambodia, itself.

Mr. Spyvak. Senator, I’d like to ask you one question on Viet Nam. I know you are against unilateral withdrawal of troops in Viet Nam, but do you think a token withdrawal to indicate U.S. intentions might serve a useful purpose at this time?

Senator Mansfield. I think it would show the Senate which we mean business about getting out in time and turning more and more of the responsibility over to them.

Mr. Spyvak. Senator, on the ABM, did I understand you to say that you had not yet made up your mind as to whether you are going to vote, that you are going to wait for the debate?

Senator Mansfield. No, I did not say I hadn’t made up my mind. I did say I was trying to keep an open mind in spite of the presidential Administration’s activities against the ABM. But I think President Nixon ordered a review on his own responsibility, tried to look at all the options open to him in this area, with an open mind, and if he himself concludes that it is in the national interest to change the situation over the last year, Senator?

Senator Mansfield. Well, I must reiterate I was against this proposal during the last year of the Johnson administration, but I think since then there has been reconsideration of the fact that, as in Viet Nam, where you have an act-react pattern, that here you might develop the same kind of action. If we were to build a number of bases we are told that the Russians would understand that they were defensive and would do nothing. In my opinion, the Russians will match us base for base and maybe more and the end result will not be $6.1 billion for a very thin system around missile bases to defend sites, not people, and the figure could become astronomical.

Mr. Spyvak. Senator, when he left office in 1961, President Eisenhower offered to the American people against the influence of the military-industrial complex. How do you appraise that influence today in the United States?

Senator Mansfield. Well, I think there is quite a complex and I would build these kind of unions to it, so it would be a military-industrial-technological complex. I think it is a deliberate complex. I think it is just because of the great stress placed on science and development here and like in the past twenty years, which has drawn these various elements together. I do not think the President, or any of them, in the I do doubt their judgment.

Mr. Shafer. Senator Mansfield, when I listened to you in your office a few days ago, we touched on the Viet Nam war and you said, “We have to get out. We never should have gotten in.”

Will you vote for appropriations to continue the war?

Senator Mansfield. Yes, I will, because the men who are out there should be given even protection. They are being killed by choice but because they have been ordered to go there by their government and, despite my great distaste for the Vietnamese war, going back to even before it began, I feel that I have an obligation to these young men who are carrying out their obligations as citizens of a country.

Mr. Shafer. Senator, this has been called on the Senate Floor, the end of the President’s son’s war. How long, in your opinion, will it be before it is thought of and called Nixon’s war?

Senator Mansfield. I hope never. I hope sincerely that the President will be able to reach a responsible settlement before that stage can be reached, but after all, it is hard to call it his war. He didn’t inaugurate it, all he did was inherit it.

Mr. Shafer. Isn’t the public patience and the Congressional patience getting very thin and won’t the distaste for this finally turn against the President if the war continues?

Senator Mansfield. Mr. Shafer, this is the way of politics, that is the way emotions run. It is unfortunate but that is a good assurance that that is the way politics run.

Mr. Finney. Let’s try to pin you down to some time period, if we can, on this. Has the administration two months, six months? How long does it have?

Senator Mansfield. I couldn’t say. It is up to the individual Senator, to the Administration’s thinking and approach towards negotiations in Paris. But from now on the dopes are doing to stay quiet.

Senator Mansfield. Well, the dopes, so-called, that stayed quiet since the President made his speech, have come back a year and a half later. I have been very much impressed with the discretion and understanding shown. However, rumblings are heard, discontent is spreading and while very few members are even in time, with the passage of time more and more members are going to make their views known. I am very much afraid that the President is aware of this discontent, this feeling that the Senate has been unreasoning in its support of the Administration’s actions against the ABM system. How do you assess the Senate’s position?

Mr. Finney. Senator, on the ABM, did I understand you to say that you had not yet made up your mind as to whether you are going to vote, that you are going to wait for the debate?

Senator Mansfield. No, I did not say I hadn’t made up my mind. I did say I was trying to keep an open mind in spite of the presidential Administration’s activities against the ABM. But I think President Nixon ordered a review on his own responsibility, tried to look at all the options open to him in this area, with an open mind, and if he himself concludes that it is in the national interest to change the situation over the last year, Senator?
Mr. FINNEY. If we can turn to Congress, Senator MANSFIELD, you have been in session for almost three months. During that period you have done some housekeeping legislation, you have voted on the budget, you have amended the nonproliferation treaty. Aside from that, you have done very little.

Mr. THEIS. It is my opinion that we have not done much up to this time—not because we aren't eager and ready and willing but maybe it is just as good that we haven't done so much. Maybe in the past eight years we have passed too much legislation. Now it is time to get down to bedrock, see that the administrative overhead is reduced, that the intent of the Congress is carried out and the moneys are spent for that purpose.

I look for this Congress to be an appropriation-minded, oversight-oriented Congress. If you want to anticipate much in the way of new legislation, or do I think much is needed.

Mr. FINNEY. Turning to appropriations, obviously one area that can be cut—not can be cut, necessarily, but that will be subject to Congress—is the military budget. Do you think it is perhaps time to revive your idea of reducing our troop strength in Europe?

Senator MANSFIELD. No, I do not, and I make that statement most reluctantly. I feel that the situation which did exist in Czechoslovakia last August that for the time being we have to stand fast. Basically, I am of the opinion that 200,000 dependents in West European is entirely too much, too many, too costly; that they should have been reduced years ago but in view of the Czechoslovakian situation I must, for the time being, hold my fire.

Mr. THEIS. Senator, going back to the matter of budget cuts in the economy, the White House has indicated that they are being advised that this has peaked and that we should turn down. How serious do you regard the inflation situation? Is it a temporary situation?

Senator MANSFIELD. I am not an economist, Mr. Chairman. I am not accused of being a fiscal profiteer. I think we can help in trying to bring about a ten to twelve billion dollar reduction in appropriations this year and to insist at the same time—as we did with President Johnson—that President Nixon and his people in the executive branch, with the cooperation of the Congress—not alone—bring about a five to six billion dollar reduction in expenditures, that we are spending too much money, appropriating too much money and there are many places where cuts can and should be made.

Mr. THEIS. Well, traditionally in Congress when all the supplemental appropriations are added up at the end of the year, some of those cuts have not shown up in a net term. The Democrats are still in control of Congress, Senator MANSFIELD, and leadership is on the lead if the Administration doesn't have the votes to see that there is a substantial reduction, and you can't have an increased surplus?

Senator MANSFIELD. We will.

Mr. THEIS. Earlier this year you said the United States has no hard and fast commitment to go to the aid of Israel. What about today? In the Middle East be, is your judgment?

Senator MANSFIELD. Well, what it is now. When I went to France, the British, Aden, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union and in that way see if we can't bring about a meeting between Israeli and Egyptian representatives that they can work out a final solution to the difficulties which have been in existence since the Suez Crisis.

Mr. SPIVAK. Don't you think, Senator, it would be better if all the nations, the big nations, Seychelles, East Africa, the United States, the Soviet Union, together and allowed the Arabs and the Israelis to settle their own problems?

Senator MANSFIELD. Well, I still feel that, having committed to go to the aid of Israel. What about the ten percent surtax?

Mr. SPIVAK. Senator, what do you think the big powers can do, particularly if the Arabs and the Israelis refuse to accept any kind of imposition?

Senator MANSFIELD. Well, there are many things that could be done. There be could be an arms embargo all the way around on the part of the Soviet Union and the United States who are the two chief suppliers at the present time. There are certain questions, of course, which have to be considered. For example, the Israeli position in so far as the Sinai Peninsula is concerned. Free passage of the Gulf of Aqaba, the control of Sharm el Sheik which guards the entrance to the Suez Canal, the situation which is fast losing its economic significance. The return in some part at least, of the area on the west bank of the Jordan and the area of the Sinal Peninsula and the Gaza Strip.

Mr. SPIVAK. Senator, you have said we have no commitment to go to the aid of Israel. What would we do if the Russians went to war in the aid of the Israelis in a military way? Could we possibly stay out of the Middle East?

Senator MANSFIELD. It would be quite difficult, but there you are asking me a question which could better be directed to the President of the United States. I would point out that the only legal tie that we had there that I know of is the so-called Eisenhower Resolution which is applicable to all countries in the area equally and is subject, I think, to only one condition and that is a threat from the outside of the area. With that situation, they can't go in.

Mr. SPIVAK. Senator, may I ask one more question: In view what you urged President Nixon to visit with President de Gaulle and other Western European heads of state, some of us thought you had done that. I don't know whether it was your instigation or not, but he certainly did it.

Senator MANSFIELD. Not mine; his own, I am sure.

Mr. SPIVAK. Do you think the time has now come for a summit meeting with the Russians?

Senator MANSFIELD. No, I think President Nixon is right that the groundwork should be laid first before there is a summit meeting. I would hope that is being done, especially in the field of disarmament, that there would not be on a linkage basis, trying in all the other questions on which there are different feelings. A summit meeting would be held between Mr. Nixon and Kosygin and Brezhnev at an appropriate time—not too long, I would hope, and that the chief negotiators of state on any agreements which had been reached. It is mandatory that the two countries get together for the sake of the peace of the world.

Mr. SPIVAK. Senator, Mansfield, there is a lot of griping about the tax increase this year that people are carrying. Do you favor extending the ten percent surtax?

Senator MANSFIELD. Reluctantly, yes, but only on the basis of what I said previously, that there should be tied with it a five to six billion dollar reduction in the actual increase, a $10 to $12 billion reduction in appropriations.

Mr. SHAFFER. In connection with that your colleague, Senator Teddy Kennedy, has suggested tying tax reform to the extension of the surtax.

Senator MANSFIELD. That is correct. I come from an oil-producing state. But I would point out that there are a number—180 I believe is the figure—of people who earn one million dollars or more a year who pay no income taxes. What I would like to see is tax reforms made in all areas and at the same time an increase in the exemption from $600 per person, which was put in in 1914, and is of no significance today, to at least $1,000 or $1,200.

Mr. SHAFFER. But is there time for Congress to attach tax reforms to the extension of the surtax, which expires on June 30th?

Senator MANSFIELD. Yes, we can do it at any time if we get the proper measure before us, at least as far as the Senate is concerned, even if the tax measures must originate in the House.

Mr. MONROE. We have less than three minutes here, may I ask you some questions with Senator Mansfield's short, snappy answers.

Mr. FINNEY. Senator, as you mentioned earlier, one of the Minuteman bases that is going to be protected is out in your home state. I wonder what you are hearing from back home. Are you getting any pressure from this military-industrial-union complex to go ahead with this system?

Senator MANSFIELD. Well, there is always that danger, Senator Kennedy being who he is and President Nixon being where he is, but I would hope most devoutly that this would not develop into a partisan issue because it is too big for that and it is the welfare of the country that ought to come ahead of the welfare or the success of a party.

Mr. THEIS. Senator, as a former college professor and who, if he had his druthers, might want to go back sometime, how would you deal with the present campus unrest?

Senator MANSFIELD. Well, I believe in demonstrations. I believe in dissent because it is going to be the great mass of the students who will not always agree with the administration of this institution. Senator Kennedy is sponsoring a book on this issue which will be, presumably, against the ABM deployment.

Mr. THEIS. But there is a danger here, of a collision or confrontation in the Constitution, a possible developing between Senator Kennedy and President Nixon?

Senator MANSFIELD. Well, there is always that danger. Senator Kennedy being who he is and President Nixon being where he is, but I would hope most devoutly that this would not develop into a partisan issue because it is too big for that and it is the welfare of the country that ought to come ahead of the welfare or the success of a party.
dents withdrawn if they are either expelled or convicted of a serious offense—

Senator Mansfield. That decision has been made because the Congress passed a law last year which leaves it up to the discretion of the local administrators, the presidents or the chancellors or whatever. They have not done anything in that respect. They say there is a Constitutional question involved. I say take it to the courts and find out.

Mr. Thiers. You would not see the present law changed?

Senator Mansfield. No.

Mr. Spiak. Senator, do you think inflation is going to be halted in this country short of wage and price controls?

Senator Mansfield. Well, I felt so a long time ago, I recommended to President Johnson as long ago as three years ago that we ought to seriously consider the imposition of wage and price controls to combat inflation and also the restoration of Regulation-W, which would cut down on credit buying which amounts to about $130 billion in this nation, today.

Mr. Monroe. I am sorry to interrupt, but our time is up. Thank you, Senator Mansfield, for being with us today on "Meet the Press."

COMMITTEE MEETINGS DURING SENATE SESSION

Mr. Mansfield. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all committees be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate today.

The Vice President. Without objection, it is so ordered.