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Mike Mansfield 1903-2001
Senate concerned over the course of the war, there­
propound alternatives whether they are
In my judgment, it is
many times on a temporary basis. Lives
are lost but once and on a permanent
basis. The continuance of our involvement
in Vietnam is a responsibility which the
Senate shares with the President. Mem­
bers of this body who are deeply con­
cerned over the course of the war, there­
fore, have not only the right but the
duty to seek out and to propose and to
propound alternatives whether they are
applicable to the diplomatic tables in
Paris or to the battlefields in Vietnam.
In my judgment, it is a mark not of dis­
respect but of the most profound appreci­
ation for the fallen in battle to try to
forestall the loss of additional American lives in Vietnam. Areas are won and lost
many times on a temporary basis. Lives
are lost but once and on a permanent
basis.

When any Senator speaks out of his
mind and heart on any aspect of this
barbaric struggle, his words are not to be
dismissed as irrelevant or less by others
in this Government. Indeed, it would be
the better part of wisdom to heed them
carefully. They may be words which are
not only in unison with the surge of sen­
timent throughout the Nation, they may
also contain a basis for a more effective
policy of peace.

Certainly one cannot say at this late
date that the course we have followed in
Vietnam—militarily or politically—has
been a paragon of wisdom. At this late
date, it ought to be obvious that there is
no infallibility of ideas anywhere with
respect to that course. We have had gen­
erals urging the bombing of Vietnam
into the stone age—as though it had very
far to go—and others urging exten­
tion of the war into Cambodia or
wherever in Southeast Asia. Still others
have asked that U.S. forces be concen­
trated into coastal areas, if not with­
drawn from Vietnam entirely and with­
out further delay.

Insofar as our Vietnamese policies are
concerned, if Senators are fallible—and
we are—so too is the Department of
State, the Department of Defense, the
National Security Council, and the Saigon
Command.

I should add that while the military
have been of late of much of the

m en in the field, but here in Washington
in the hilestone military and civilian cir­
cles of the government branch. It is not
an even an original policy of the present ad­
ministration, but rather a carry-over
from one administration to the next. It
has brought no curb in casualties and
given no tangible indication of bringing
the war closer to a conclusion.

It may well be that what we need is
something of the courage which has
been displayed on the battlefields to face
up to our responsibilities here in Wash­
ington. It is time to consider adjusting
these continuing policies. Military and
diplomatic—to the end that the loss of
life and the hideous devastation may be
reduced in Vietnam and the ground laid
for a new effort of negotiations to
terminate the conflict.

Speaking of courage, we might well
note the birthday of one who possessed
it in full measure, for the purposes
of peace no less than for war, the 35th
President of the United States, John
Fitzgerald Kennedy. He would have been
52 years old, today, had not the shots
which echoed out of another conflict—
out of the conflict within this Nation—
cut him down. Since his death—a death
in the service of his country—this ice­
berg of inner dissension has emerged in
its enormity to spread violence on cam­
pus and in city and town throughout the
Nation. The disquiet deepens and the
need to find solutions grows more urgent.
As in Vietnam, there is no infallibility in
any part of the Government with respect
to a course which will lead to solutions.
It is in order, however, for the Senate, no
less than any other branch of the Gov­
ernment, to probe, to seek, and to urge
rational alternatives.

Until a way is found to curb the vio­
ence within this Nation and to end it
in Vietnam, there may be escape but
there will be no surcease for any of us
on this weekend or any other.