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Congressional Record S. 13571 - Draft Reform

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, what I am about to say is for the record. The proposed reform of the draft law is one of the most important social measures to be considered by the 91st Congress. It affects the lives of the youth of our Nation. Many Senators have devoted much effort to devise proposals to remove the great inequities in the present system. These proposals will be considered in the Senate when the Senate considers changing the draft laws. The Senate rules grant that prerogative to each Senator on every measure to come before the Senate. This draft reform proposal should not be considered as being any
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

November 3, 1969

It is not an either-or situation. The amendment should be passed now so that the Draft Act clarifying the present law can be promptly amended. Then Congress should start the lengthy and complex debate on over-all reform. The inherent advantage of easy political gain is always a strong temptation. But if this case the apparent advantage may be wholly illusory. So we may not by vote such young voters-to-be will remember just who it was that blocked the way when a measure of relief was in sight, and will act accordingly.

MANSFIELD EATS ON DRAFT

An apple a day is Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield. The Montana Democrat has eaten, however, in his refusal to let the Senate take up prompt action on the draft law at this session of Congress. President Nixon is on the side of the angels in urging him to reconsider. He has gone on record as saying he is a reason for getting to work.

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course, as it happens. I am glad to have the matter straightened out.

Mr. MANSFIELD. I am delighted to have the opportunity to straighten the matter out because I want to assure the distinguished Senator and acting minority leader that any measure which is reported by the committee is given swift consideration by the policy committee. Insofar as the joint leadership is concerned, we endeavor to bring legislation up as rapidly as possible, once it is placed on the calendar. But neither leaders can do a thing unless a draft reform bill is reported from the Armed Services Committee and then placed on the calendar.

For example, we find that the Committee on the Judiciary some 3 weeks ago, reported the Haynsworth nomination. It will be another week or so before it will be placed on the calendar. I would have liked to have brought up the Haynsworth nomination a month ago, but until and unless that nomination, reported by the Judiciary Committee, is placed on the Executive Calendar, there is nothing the joint leaders can do.

I made my statement this morning for the purpose of setting the record straight because some people seem to have the idea that the Senator from Montana can withhold or push forward legislation. They credit me with too much power and authority when, as a matter of fact, I really have less authority than the other 99 Members of the Senate.

This leadership operates on the basis of cooperation, understanding, and tolerance, but there are certain rules which have to be followed and, No. 1 is that before a bill can be called up, it has to be on the calendar.

Mr. GRIFFIN. I think that is an important statement of the majority leader's position. It clarifies the situation as I understand it. Now, if draft reform does not come to the floor, it will not be because of any attitude on the part of the majority leader. It will be because the bill is not reported out of the committee. At least, the committee will not have the excuse of pointing to any statement by the majority leader; committee members cannot say, in effect, that there is no point in us considering or reporting the bill because it will not come to the floor anyway. That was the impression I was concerned about as of last Thursday.

Mr. MANSFIELD. I appreciate the President's concern. Had I been in his shoes, perhaps I would have reacted similarly. But I think that the record should be made clear, and I think it is.