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Congressional Record - Veterans Day

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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We have asked much of the men in Vietnam. We have asked them to persevere in a struggle which, on all sides, it is now devoutly wished had never been joined. We have asked them to stay until an honorable way out of the conflict can be found. Whatever we may do for the men in Vietnam—and we will, all of us, do everything that can be done to support them until their return—will not change that face of this conflict.

Vietnam is a war unclaimed by this administration or its predecessors. It is a war unclaimed by this Congress or the ones before. Yet, this war belongs to us all. We cannot evade it—not this administration nor its predecessors, not this Congress nor its predecessors. We are all its possessors and we are all possessed by it. We are—all of us—the makers of the veterans of Vietnam. The relentless clicking which computes the casualties is our responsibility.

This day, then, is of special significance not only for veterans, but for us as well, for all of us, in the administration and in Congress. However, reluctantly, we are partners in the continuance of Vietnam. At this late hour it will serve no useful purpose to assess blame or praise, as between the branches or among ourselves. The responsibility—the joint responsibility—is to strive to shorten the path to peace. We owe that to our conscience. We owe it to the people of the United States. We owe it to the living and the dead of Vietnam and to all the veterans of the Nation.

VETERANS DAY

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, in this century, over a million and a half Americans have been killed or wounded in war. That is a measure of the failure to establish peace in the international life of our times. The numbers are grim. I mention them only because the peace we sought with these sacrifices is not yet in sight. How remote it remains is to be seen in the arms race which goes on without check. How distant it remains is stark in Vietnam.

We mark this day for those million and a half lives and more which were ended or hurt in the Nation's wars of this century. We mark it, too, for the tens of millions who at one time or another interrupted their personal pursuits to serve the Nation in the armed services.

This year, as last, Veterans Day has special and somber meaning. The war in Vietnam persists; the fighting and dying continues. As of this hour, the casualties of Vietnam surpass 300,000. At last summation, the dead were more than 46,000 and the wounded over 256,000.