Remarks of Senator Mansfield in Honor of Senator Albert Gore at Democratic Rally

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001
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In honor of
Senator Albert Gore
At the Democratic Rally at the Fairgrounds Coliseum
Nashville, Tennessee
Saturday, November 15, 1969
6:30 p.m.

I am delighted to join in this gathering, tonight, in honor of the leadership of the Democratic Party of Tennessee. Because of our long association, I am especially happy to be here with Senator Albert Gore.

He has been my colleague in the Senate for more than 17 years. I have called him friend for many years more. To me, Albert Gore is the personification of Tennessee. He is the embodiment of the best in public service.

Albert Gore and I served together in the House of Representatives. We entered the Senate together in 1953. Throughout all these years, we have worked side by side, on behalf of our respective states and the United States. We were drawn together from the outset because we speak for places where rivers are a common language of economic survival and we both happen to believe that they should be used for the good of all and not for the profit of the few.
Above all, we speak for people who believe in a decent peace and who want it sought by their government without "ifs," "ands," or "buts." We speak for an end to this tragic war which has divided the nation and its people. We are Democrats but, whatever their party affiliation or absence of it, we try to act on behalf of all of the people of our states.

The character of Albert Gore is written into his outstanding record in the House and Senate. His is a fierce integrity of mind and an unbridled independence of spirit. His is a vision of a splendid tomorrow for this nation and for its diverse peoples.

Albert Gore is one of the Senate's leading authorities on the nation's economy. Time and again he has warned of the dangers of high interest rates, inflation and inequitable taxation. Time and again, he has stood almost alone in beating back one or more of these assaults on the well-being of people of moderate income.

His warnings have gone unheeded for too long. Now the squeeze is on. Inflation is taking its toll out of the standard of living of tens of millions of Americans. Consumer prices have gone up 6 per cent this year. Inflation rides the market-basket of every shopper. Food prices are 5.7 per cent above the level of a year ago. Beef is up 13 per cent. Eggs are up 15 per cent.
The cost of mortgages, real estate, taxes, insurance, repairs and related expenses are up 11 per cent over 1963.

Unemployment was 3.5 per cent in August; it was 4.0 per cent in September—the highest level in two years, and the highest monthly increase since 1960. It may be a matter of coincidence, but 1960 also happens to be when the last Republican Administration was in charge in Washington. I repeat, it may be a matter of coincidence; then, again, it may also be a matter of stubborn Republicanism. Note that with a 5 per cent unemployment rate predicted in 1970, the Administration still declines to say whether this level would be "unacceptable."

Albert Gore does not decline to say. I know he does not find a 5 per cent rate of unemployment acceptable, just as he did not find an 8 per cent prime interest rate acceptable. Albert Gore is not the kind of Senator who will embrace a recession or depression in the guise of curbing an inflation.

Nor is Albert Gore willing to settle for the neglect of the health of Americans because they are unable to pay the sky-high cost of hospital and medical care. He was a leader in bringing Medicare programs to bear on the problem. Yet even this vital national program is now exposed to danger of insolvency because of runaway costs and a rampant inflation. Hospital charges alone have soared an astronomical 55 per cent, almost five times the rise in consumer prices.
This Administration has not fulfilled its promise to curb inflation.

It has opposed the Senate's efforts to bring about reductions in wasteful and superfluous expenditures in the Defense Department. It does not appear to recognize the relationship of the tens of billions which we are spending annually for military purposes abroad and the rising inflationary pressures at home. Senator Gore understands that relationship. He also knows that the continuance of the surtax without relief from inflation and from the inequities in the income tax structure adds insult to the injury which millions of American wage-earners and salaried employees are already suffering. In full consultation with Senator Gore, therefore, the Democratic leadership in the Senate has resisted Administration demands for a continuance of the surtax unless there is also tax relief and tax reform. That is and has been a matter of Democratic policy in the Senate since the beginning of this session.

The fact is that the present income tax system is a gerrymandered house of special privileges for some at the expense of many. In the Senate we are now trying to restore a degree of order and fairness to this structure.

May I say that I look to Senator Gore for guidance in this matter because I know where his heart is and I know that he has the head to get us there.
To give you an example, on July 17, Senator Gore said on the Senate floor, "I know of no more unrealistic provision in the tax law than the $600 exemption for a taxpayer and for a taxpayer's dependent. Where is there a parent," he asked, "who can decently feed, clothe and provide shelter for a child for $600, or for himself or for his wife?"

If the views of the Democratic leadership in the Senate prevail, wage-earners and other persons on moderate incomes are going to get a measure of tax relief. As a senior member of the Senate Finance Committee, Albert Gore will be a moving force in this effort to bring about greater equity.

His work on the Foreign Relations Committee is also of the greatest significance. It bears directly on questions of fundamental importance to the entire nation—the war in Viet Nam and nuclear armaments and disarmament. In sending Albert Gore to the Senate, Tennessee has kept alive the international tradition of this state which was personified by Cordell Hull over a quarter of a century ago.

Senator Gore knows the world and the nation's international problems as do few men in the Congress or in the Administration. His views come into focus as a deep abhorrence of the tragedy of the war in Viet Nam and a deep hostility to the excesses and the waste which are sometimes concealed in the name of defense. There is a difference between patriotism and profiteering and Albert Gore is determined that it shall be reasserted and maintained.
Insofar as Viet Nam is concerned, his views have long since been straightforward and outspoken. He is not for "peace, but...," or "peace, if..." or "peace, perhaps..." He is, as he has long been, for "peace, period." I appreciate the President's difficulties in that situation as does Albert Gore.

To be sure, President Nixon did not make the problem of Viet Nam. But, then, neither did President Johnson. Nor President Kennedy. Nor President Eisenhower. Its roots are deep and all of us, in a sense, have had a part in the planting.

Nevertheless, the war remains. The responsibility is now. It is the President's problem and, to the extent that we are Constitutionally empowered in the Senate and the Congress, it is our problem.

I am sure the President is seeking a way to peace according to his own lights. That he has a plan I do not doubt but he has yet to illuminate it. A rational peace remains to be achieved and I do not yet see how it can be achieved except by the disengagement of this nation--not in stops and starts--but in an orderly manner from this involvement which is not now, never was and never can be our war.
This nation must not be the dog that is wagged by the tail of the Saigon government. It must not be a rudderless ship waiting for the winds to shift in Hanoi. We must make our own decisions in the light of the nation's highest interests. And so far as I am concerned, those interests call for the termination of our involvement in Viet Nam at the soonest possible time.

The decisions must not be made for us by the Vietnamese of any faction. Viet Nam is their country, not ours. After we are gone from it, whether they be Nationalists, Viet Congs, Hoa Haos, Buddhists or Cao Daists--the Vietnamese will still live in it and with one another.

Senator Gore said it another way on the Senate floor last November 4. He said then that "this Nation should utilize its overwhelming presence in Viet Nam to persuade the establishment of a broadly-based government that would include the diverse factors, sects and faction, to serve as a means of concluding a peaceful settlement, and to provide some hope for the ultimate survival of democratic processes and freedom in South Viet Nam."

On the issue of Viet Nam, as on all other major issues of our times, the voice of Senator Gore has not been silent and must not be silenced. It is a constructive voice in the Senate, for the State of Tennessee and for the nation.
There are other voices and they are raised, now, on all sides of the question of Viet Nam. As the war's frustrations persist, the divisions in the nation are deepening. The antagonisms are spreading. The decibals of violence and hate-mongering are growing.

In the circumstances, it would be well to bear in mind that the First Amendment to the Constitution protects every citizen's rights to speak his mind freely, to assemble peaceably and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. That is the bedrock of the nation's freedom. The safeguarding of that right by Constituted authorities is not only a responsibility, it is a sacred duty.

I stress the word "peaceable" assembly as it is involved in the exercise of these Constitutional rights because these are difficult days and threats of disruption hang heavily over the nation. I do not believe in license or violence. Those who resort to it make a mockery of the Constitution. License and violence are contrary to law and those who violate the law must bear the consequences.
Albert Gore, I know, holds these sentiments. He knows the profound
significance of the First Amendment to the survival of the nation as well as the
necessity for maintaining public order. He has defended both throughout his years
in public life. He has stood not only for the peaceful exercise of Constitutional
rights by those with whom he may agree but by those with whom he may disagree.
That is as it should be, that is as it can only be if the Republic is to remain free.

In concluding, let me ask all of you to join in working to hold the confidence
of the people where we Democrats now possess it and to regain that confidence where
it has been withdrawn. I am persuaded that the democratic perception of the nation's
horizons is in accord with the needs of the people of the nation. We stand for a
determination to bring the war in Viet Nam to a rational end as soon as possible.
We stand for a redirection of the nation's resources from wasteful excesses in the
name of defense and from other spending of irrelevance to meeting the urgent inner
deficits of the nation—to strengthening education and health care, to safeguarding
the air, water, land and recreational resources of the nation, to improving the
livelihood of all of the American people (whether on the farms or in the cities),
to advancing the welfare of the elderly and to the reinforcement of public safety
throughout the nation.
There is a pressing need in the entire range of these basic requirements for a stable, progressive and satisfactory society. Democrats, out of power, must probe into these matters, not just with words but with hard work and deep commitment. Democrats in power must act on these matters within the limits of their capabilities.

I know Democrats. I know what they can do. Montana's delegation in Washington is 100 per cent Democratic—in both the House and the Senate. The Governor of Montana is a Democrat. A year from now it would be my hope that the people of Tennessee will make the same affirmation with the re-election of Albert Gore as Senator, with the election of Democrats to the Congress and to your state and local offices.