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Congressional Record S. 631 - President's Veto on Labor HEW Appropriations

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001
Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, the President has his independent responsibilities; he has acted on them, according to his lights. I do not agree with the President's action. I hope the Congress will reverse that action. The veto message in its reference to inflation ignores the fact that the Congress has already cut out of the President's overall budget many times the amount which has been added in this bill. It has cut frills for defense. It has cut fancies for space. The reduction in foreign aid alone roughly equals the sum that was added by the Congress to this bill for better education and libraries, for pollution control, for hospital construction, health research, and nursing training, for programs to try to get the poor off the relief rolls and into productive occupations. All of these items and others in this bill have a lot to do with the quality of American life about which the President has spoken so eloquently. Where, then, if so much more has been cut than has been added, is the overall inflationary impact?

There are items in this bill with which I do not agree. That is the way with most significant legislation. I might say, one of the items which I think is open to scrutiny is the one which the President emphasized in his veto message, and that is the question of impacted aid, because there are some areas where it is not needed and where, think, some tightening up and corrections can be made. But because a small part of the program is affected in this particular measure, it does not mean necessarily that the whole program of impacted aid is bad. It is not. There are items in this bill with which the President disagreed but we do not have an item-by-item veto power in the Presidency. We still operate on the principle of compromise in this Government.

There comes a time when the perfection which is attainable in words confronts the practicabilities which are pursuasive in action. Between them lies a void of immobilized disenchantment. That is the point of decision. It seems to me that is where we are on this appropriation bill. To fail to pass this bill, in my judgment, will be to invite the continued neglect of the Nation's inner needs. To pass this bill will be to move a little closer toward a new and better balance as between domestic urgencies, the needs of defense and the requirements of foreign policy. I want to emphasize that, in my opinion, the keyword is "balance" between all three. In that sense, this is the right bill at the right time and for the right purpose.