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Mike Mansfield 1903-2001
the direct election because I believe that fully one-half of the Members of the Senate are opposed to the direct system but they would be unable to agree on any substitute plan.

For that reason, it seems likely to the junior Senator from Alabama that there will be no reform at this point. Does the Senator feel that that is a likelihood?

Mr. CURTIS. I do. There are 34 of the 50 States that would be adversely affected if we changed to the direct election of the President. I do not believe they have any such mandate from the people back home to lessen the power of their sovereign States in choosing the President.

Mr. ALLEN. The Senator’s argument is that the voter in Nebraska wants to go to the polls feeling he is going to be a part of the Nebraska vote, and when the Nebraska vote is counted it will count for something because it will be represented in the electoral vote of the State of Nebraska. It will not be commingled with 75 million other votes and will be identified with that single State.

Mr. CURTIS. When I cast my vote in Nebraska, it will not be buried under a boulder in Chicago.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HART in the chair). Under the previous order, the Senator from Montana is recognized for 15 minutes.

LAOS

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I take the floor of the Senate at this time because of the serious situation in Laos. I do so not to criticize, but, if possible, to be constructive, to be helpful, and to wave a warning flag about this area which might perhaps be helpful in preventing our becoming involved too deeply and in too costly a manner. When I speak of costly, I do not mean money alone, but total cost, including manpower.

Perhaps, the Pathet Lao and their North Vietnamese allies may stop the offensive on the Plain of Jars, short of the cities of Vientiane and Luang Prabang; that would be in the pattern of previous operations. Then again, they may push forward against these two capitals and press to the border of Thailand. Only time will indicate what plans and objectives may be involved. In any event, the question of the “nonwar” or the “secret-war” or “interlude war” in Laos cannot be avoided any longer.

Notwithstanding the Geneva accord of 1962, the North Vietnamese are deeply involved in this military situation. So, too, is the United States. Press reports indicate that the Thais may also be engaged. The involvement is so transparent on both sides as to make less than useless the effort to maintain the fiction of the accord or even to exchange charge and countercharge of violations. We are both in it—North Vietnamese and Americans—and we are in it up to our necks.

What disturbs me is that it is not only that both nations are forbidden by the Geneva agreement to use forces in Laos
but that the President has also made clear that he does not desire to see U.S. forces used in Laos. May I add that I have every confidence in the President’s intentions and appreciation of the action of other signatories, especially the Southeast Asian nations. We are not among those who would wish to see a conclusive involvement of this type, but we have not been misled into believing that the President’s action involves anything so dire.

In any event, the President’s action is a step backward, and I feel that it does not contribute to the realization of the situation in Laos. It is a step that we must deal with, and I think it is a step that we cannot ignore.

The North Vietnamese have long since moved troops into the border areas of Northeastern Laos to guard the so-called Ho Chi Minh trails. These are the routes by which military supplies move down into South Vietnam. By the same token, American planes have long since been bombing the trails. The bilateral nature of the Geneva accord in this case at least have been directly related to the war in Vietnam.

Of late, however, both Americans and North Vietnamese have expanded military activities further into Laos, in the region of the Plain of Jars. There is reported to be something on the order of 45,000 to 50,000 North Vietnamese now on the northern border of Laos. According to reports, not only has manpower increased but antiaircraft missiles have been implanted. On the part of the United States the bombing in Laos is reported to be heavier than it was in North Vietnam and that there could now be as many as 20,000 sorties a month.

In short, the war seems to be pouring out of South Vietnam through the Laotian panhandle into the rest of Laos and the rest of Indochina. Even Cambodia, which has sought wisely, behind the wall of neutrality, to hold back the jumble of war, has felt, of late, the intensified pressure of this flow of destruction.

As in 1965, the events in Laos caution the threat of a continuing and conclusive involvement in Southeast Asia remains unchanged. Indeed, it may be enlarging to embrace Laos. If the military seesaw goes down in Vietnam only to rise in Laos, our situation will not have improved; it will have worsened. In my judgment, only the utmost vigilance, on the part of the responsible officials of this Government, the President, and the Senate in particular, and of the press will counteract this inevitable tendency.

Prince Souvanna Phouma has said that he was going to ask cochairmen of the Geneva accord, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, to call a meeting of all the signatories to put into effect the agreement of 1962. This renewed call will be commended, and certainly it should be supported in every possible way. It would be my hope that all signatories to the Geneva accord would meet in an effort to restore a measure of stability to the situation in Laos. Moreover, the scope of any such meeting might be enlarged to include the situation in all of Southeast Asia, with the participation of other affected nations, such as Cambodia and Thailand.

If the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, as cochairmen, would call this conference, it might be possible to draw still useful guidance from the Geneva agreements of 1954 which involved the three Indochinese States. As for Laos, the agreement of 1962 seems to me, still, to be valid. In retrospect, this agreement was never given a full opportunity to get off the ground. Negotiations in Paris or in Geneva but, in any event, at an authoritative level, seem to me still to offer the best prospect for a settlement which would enable the United States to withdraw completely from the present military enmeshment in the Southeast Asian mainland.