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Congressional Record S. 6828 - Student Demonstrations

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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letter which the Secretary of the Interior, Hon. Walter Hickel, wrote to the President of the United States. I think these are all steps in the right direction, and I for one wish to commend the administration and give to it its just due.

I believe we are facing a most dangerous and stormy situation in this country. It does not apply only to students in college; there are millions of other youngsters who have not had the opportunity to go to college and who, somehow or other, have been lost in the shuffle. They, too, must and should be given consideration.

The trend in this country has been toward a polarization of the people. It is an ugly trend, because it will do the Republic no good. I would hope that the evidence we have seen this week, which seems to indicate a desire to bring about a mutual accommodation, will be continued. I would hope that these young men and women, college and noncollege, will be listened to, will be heard, and will have consideration given to the questions on their minds. I am sure that every Member of this body intends to do just that, so far as these young people are concerned. It will be an education not only for us as individuals, but also, I think, for the administration. We cannot turn our backs on these fellow Americans, these fellow citizens, these children of ours. Most of them want to do the right thing. They are all entitled to be heard.

I do not advocate assaults on persons or property. Those actions lie outside the scope of the protections provided by the first amendment of the Constitution of the United States. But I do believe in the right of dissent—peaceful dissent. I do believe in the right of these young people to petition their Senators, their Representatives, and their Government. I do believe in the elements of the first amendment: freedom of press, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and the right to assemble peaceably—and “peaceably” is the key word.

So I would hope that these young people, when they meet this weekend, will do so peaceably. If they do, I think I can assure them that in that way they will have a greater effect than in any other way. If there is violence on the part of a mini-group, as was the case in front of the Department of Justice at the time of the moratorium last November, and as was the case at Dupont Circle and before the South Vietnamese Embassy, that is what the television cameras will focus on, that is what will get the attention, and that is what will create the wrong impression.

So I say to these young people that I hope they, as citizens, will conduct themselves in a proper manner. If they do so, it will be to their own and to the Republic's benefit.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, there is a great influx of students from various parts of the country into this area. There will be more. There will be demonstrations, I understand, as well in the Nation's Capitol over the weekend.

I have been talking with some of the students, some of whom I met accidentally and other students from Montana who were attending eastern universities. I found them to be deeply concerned. I found them to be individuals who want to do the right thing within the Constitution, who want to be heard and who want to be given some assurances that their complaints will be heeded.

I am very much pleased with the actions taken by the administration in recent days; for example, by the Department of Justice in asking for a waiver of the 15-day rule, so that these young men and women may participate in a peaceable demonstration this weekend. I was pleased that the President found an hour of his time to sit down with six students from Kent State University. I was pleased and pleasantly surprised to read in this morning's newspaper about the