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Congressional Record - Cambodia (re: Byrd-Griffin Modification)

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June 9, 1970

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD - SENATE

S. 6835

The PRESIDING OFFICER, without objection, is so ordered.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, what I am about to say has no personal implications for the President, for any Member of this body, or for anyone who may disagree with my remarks. I thought that the President, April 20 last, did an excellent job in quieting the doubts and fears of these people and, at the same time, raising our hopes on the basis of his previously announced and further announced withdrawals of U.S. troops from Vietnam. Even the campuses were relatively quiet and seemed to be willing to give support to the President's phased withdrawal policy.

Since that time a number of things have happened which have caused a change in attitude, a change in climate, and have brought about a division among our people, a polarization in the Nation, and that about the present and old, black and white, hawks and doves.

It has not been helpful to know that the economy has steadily deteriorated. It has not been helpful to know of the stock market conviction, even after a partial recovery which was a result, I am sure, of a meeting which President Nixon had with a sizable number of American businessmen.

Since that time, also, the President has hailed military gains in Cambodia—and rightly—but critics have feared that what he did in Cambodia will expand, enlarge, and accelerate the war rather than shorten it.

Then, of course, there are those who feel that the President, before he made this precipitate move, should have consulted with Members of Congress, not necessarily with the Democratic Members, although that is always appreciated, but primarily and specifically with his own leaders in the House and the Senate, so that there could have been some show of consultation before the move was made.

The Cambodian adventure—and that is what it is—has raised questions: What is going to happen to the South Vietnamese who remain in Cambodia after the first of next month? What will be the policy of this country insofar as bombing Cambodia is concerned after the first of next month? What will be our concepts, after the capture of huge enemy supply dumps and the like, of what Peking and Moscow will do in the way of replenishing the material that has been captured, lost, or destroyed?

What questions which have been raised with regard to the official explanations? Was it a foray to punish an enemy threat as indicated by Presi-

dent Nixon on April 30, or was it to seize a military "opportunity," as stated by Secretary of Defense Laird on May 13, around the time, I believe he said that, when the invasion of Cambodia took place, the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese forces had already retreated 15 miles to the west?

What forces were concentrating on the Cambodian border at that time in the Cambodian sanctuaries?

What forces were actually moving out of them?

All of these developments and questions serve as a prelude to the rise of a deep feeling of concern which many of us feel. I know that the same concern is felt by those who uphold the pending business, the Byrd-Griffin amendment, as long as those who oppose it.

So, I want it very clearly understood that I will not be a party to divisiveness in this country. I will do nothing to bring about a polarization in this country. I believe there remains in Cambodia a strong and not necessarily a military force, and must face them. He must act on them in the best interests of the Nation as he comes to see those interests. In turn, he leaves a damaged and continuing set of commitments to his successor.

I do not speak with rancor of the President's exercise of his responsibilities in this connection. Rather, I speak in humility and with some regret of the manner in which we have perceived and acted on our responsibilities as a Senate with regard to Southeast Asia.

That is the explanation of the President's intentions have been the best. For many years, we have seen our role in matters of war and peace largely as one of acquiescence in the acts of the executive branch. If we have had doubts, we have swallowed them. Since President Eisenhower's administration, at least, we have time, and again deferred to the executive branch in international matters. The executive branch has presented us with decisions. We have gone along. We have rocked few boats.

That is the explanation of hundreds of billions of dollars of defense appropriation little debated in this body for 15 or more years. That is the sound of various Senate recalcitrance, which the President has treated with the utmost respect, and of Presidents actions abroad, sometimes even before the actions were taken. We have proceeded in the name of national unity and in the language of nonpartisanship.

In the presumed pursuit of security, not only politics but the exercise of the separate constitutional powers of the Senate has stopped at the water's edge.

There is the explanation of the Tonkin Gulf resolution of 1964. In that act, the Senate joined the House in deferring to the President. Then, too, the Senate gave assent to what the Executive had done, that is, to the President's exercise of constitutional powers in the way of committing the Nation's Armed Forces in Vietnam.

Why did we do it? Why did the Senate adopt the Tonkin Gulf resolution in order to avoid dissenting votes? Were we fearful of exercising an independent judgment? Was it because we accepted assurances that the President would not ask us to do in a situation in which we had been committed by the President in protecting American forces already in Vietnam? Were we persuaded...
The branch the subscribe not only to what is done in apply, executive branch Cooper-Church modification.

ence was venting the further spread of the war have died in Cambodia. We are asked to branch has done, what painful effect. Griffin...Griffin gave the green light to go further into Cambodia in the name of the executive branch in Cambodia.

In August, 1964, there were less than 20,000 U.S. servicemen in Indochina. Today there are upwards of 425,000 and under the previous administration the total rose to well over 500,000. In the 11 years before the Tonkin Gulf resolution, our casualties were less than 200 Americans killed—20 a year—in retrospect, that was far too much in Vietnam. In the 6 years since, 50,000 have died in Indochina—almost 9,000 a year.

Six years ago the U.S. military presence was largely confined to South Vietnam and a few coastal Vietnamese cities. The U.S. involvement was still indirect and peripheral. Now 6 years after the Tonkin Gulf resolution, U.S. servicemen are scattered through Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia. The involvement is direct and, notwithstanding the so-called Vietnamization program, it is central to the entire structure of the war in Indochina. I do not recall this history without a painful awareness of the Senate's part in its writing. Yet it must be recalled. It must be recalled because the Senate is, again, face to face with another Tonkin Gulf resolution. I refer to the Byrd-Griffin modification which is now pending to the Cooper-Church amendment.

Once again, the Senate is asked, in effect, to decide whether the executive branch has done, what it is doing, and what it may do with regard to Cambodia. That is the price the Senate is quoted if we would retain even a premise of preventing the further spread of the war under the Cooper-Church amendment. We are asked by the Byrd-Griffin modification to give legal endorsement to whatever course may be set by the executive branch in Cambodia. We are asked to subscribe not only to what is done in Cambodia in the name of the Congress and under this President but, if the war persists, under his successor, whatever he may be and, perhaps, his successor's successor.

The end of the Byrd-Griffin modification. It would establish for the Cambodian policies of the executive branch the same legal basis that the Tonkin Gulf resolution fashioned for the Vietnam situation long years before.

The Byrd-Griffin modification says that Cooper-Church will not apply unless the executive branch decrees that it should apply. Griffin, the proxy for Cooper-Church against the spread of their involvement into Cambodia stands or falls on a word from the White House.

Let the executive branch affirm that what it does in Cambodia is for the purpose of protecting our forces in Vietnam. Let either be said by the executive branch at any time and the Cooper-Church limitations are nullified. No matter that the Senate is not consulted. No matter that the Congress is ignored. No matter how long U.S. forces remain in Cambodia to what Americans may die in Cambodia, no matter how many more billions are spent in compounding the tragedy of Vietnam, it will all be done with the legal sanction of the Senate.

I know that the authors of the Byrd-Griffin modification do not expect the modification to work in that fashion. I know that when President Johnson said from West Virginia and the Senator from Michigan want not to prolong but to end the involvement in Cambodia. They want to protect Vietnam, America, not Cambodia, not jeopardize others in Cambodia. That is what we all want.

Is it not what we wanted—all of us when we passed the Tonkin Gulf resolution 6 years ago?

The Byrd-Griffin modification is a direct descendant of the Tonkin Gulf resolution. The clay carries the same imprint. The door to further involvement in Cambodia is not closed by Byrd-Griffin. Byrd-Griffin opens the door wider. It sanctions an in-and-out entanglement in Cambodia. It sanctions a direct or indirect entanglement in Cambodia. It sanctions an ad infinitum involvement in Cambodia even as the Tonkin Gulf resolution did the same for the open-ended involvement in Vietnam.

Byrd-Griffin lifts the Congressional counterweights which Cooper-Church seeks to place against the pressures for expanding involvement in Indochina. It shackles the Senate's responsibility to join its joint constitutional authority with that of the President in a common effort to confine the war and withdraw U.S. forces.

If Byrd-Griffin is adopted on Thursday next, let there be no Monday morning regrets. Let there be no shocked indignation later. Whatever our intent, we will have cleared the way for another Vietnam in Cambodia and, perhaps, for still others elsewhere. The time to face the implications of Byrd-Griffin is now. It is not next year or the year after.

Six years of tragic aftermaths from the Tonkin Gulf resolution flings the war warning. We cannot consign the Senate's constitutional responsibilities in matters of war and peace. We cannot transfer them to the legislative branch, under this President or any other. We cannot take refuge from them without doing fundamental violence to the Constitution and endanger the stability of the Republic.

The Senate can work with a President within the constitutional framework in matters of war and peace. It can work with the pressures for war, but the Senate cannot and must not work for any President, regardless of party considerations, in matters of war and peace. It is not a question of supporting or opposing the President. It is a question of fulfilling our separate constitutional obligations.

I believe that the President has expressed some sort of unofficial endorsement of the pending modification. The White House has written a letter. That is the President's right. But the commit-
We have spilled too much of the Nation's young blood in a wasting and mistaken war in Indochina. We have spent too much of the Nation's strength in alien lands for an ill-starred purpose. We have thought too much of saving face and not enough of saving lives. All the while, the troubles within our own borders have multiplied. All the while, flashes of new dangers streak across other horizons. All the while the Nation remains bound in Southeast Asia where fundamental interests are not engaged but great national resources disappear in an endless flow.

The hour is late, very late. The Byrd-Griffin modification, in my judgment, is the critical vote of this issue. Reject it and the Senate will say that the way out of Vietnam is not by way of Cambodia. Adopt Byrd-Griffin to Cooper-Church and the Senate will still say that the way out of Vietnam is not by way of Cambodia, but only if the executive branch also says the same thing.

The constitutional message of Cooper-Church without this proposed addition is clear. The Senate acts in concert with the President's expressed determination but under its own legal responsibility in an effort to curb the further expansion of the war in Indochina. The Byrd-Griffin modification clouds that message.

In my judgment, the Senate should keep the Cooper-Church amendment free of distortion. The credibility of the Senate demands it. The urgencies of the Nation require it.