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The Needs of the Nation - National Association of Retail Druggists

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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REM AR KS OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA) 
at the Annual Convention of the 
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RETAIL DRUGGISTS 
ATLANTIC CITY, NEW JERSEY 
OCTOBER 19, 1970 
11:45 a.m., e.d.s.t

THE NEEDS OF THE NATION

It is autumn. An election is in the air. Prescriptions for the nation's social ills are flashed on the TV screens with smiling faces that bear little resemblance to the Smith Brothers. The only similarity between these political medicines and the kind that are dispensed in your profession is that they are both somewhat high-priced.

If you are concerned by the rash handling of the nation's political health, let me assure you that it is not likely to kill the patient. We will survive the flamboyant commercialism of the campaign. The nation will still be alive on the morning of November fourth. Not the public relations in which it is encased, but the election itself is the most
important element in the American political process. The good sense of the electorate can be counted on to make the distinction.

Irrespective of the outcome—whether this election yields more Democrats or Republicans—the needs of the nation will not change on November fourth. We will still have to achieve peace. We will still have to bring the economic recession to an end. We will still have to face up to certain internal difficulties—the environmental abuse and the neglected social urgencies which contrive to raise the nation's blood pressure.

These difficulties are readily apparent. They are known to both parties. It does not matter whether the problem is pollution, crime, housing, education, transportation or whatever. Republicans and Democrats do not split on party lines on the identity of the crucial questions. Responses to them are now usually the subject of unanimous or near
unanimous votes in the Senate because party panaceas simply do not exist for national problems. What Republican or Democrat in the Senate, for example, does not believe improvements in the educational system are essential in this nation? How are these improvements to be brought about insofar as the federal government can be of help, other than by providing for more schools and teachers, higher standards, better training, more effective methods?

As in education, so in many other difficulties of the current era. The pressing issues of this decade have already been largely defined. Most of the significant questions now before the federal government have to do with national priorities. How is the national leadership to direct the expenditures of tax funds and other federal resources and energies to meet the nation's problems? What is more, or less urgent? What should be emphasized or de-emphasized? To put it bluntly, where are more dollars to be spent or less?
There is unanimity in the Senate on one point. A great deal of federal attention must go to crime and violence in this nation. That does not mean the federal government must supplant local law enforcement agencies. It does not mean a national police. But it does mean a very substantial federal supplement to state and local efforts to control crime. The need has become apparent as crime has become all-pervasive. No part of the nation enjoys immunity from the current wave of lawlessness. No segment of society is exempt from its destructive impact.

The national cost of crime and violence is enormous. Estimates put the loss in excess of $20 billion a year, a figure calculated in part from the value of stolen goods—the tangible, involuntary transfers of property. What is sometimes overlooked, however, is that there is also an additional cost of crime which derives from the price of suppression, prevention and correction. There is also a cost for such intangibles as the destroyed earn-
ing power of victims. There is even a cost to society from the foregone earnings of the criminals themselves.

In one way or another, all of us bear the burden of crime and violence even if we are fortunate enough not to be an injured bystander or the primary victim of a mugger or an intruder. We bear the burden in higher insurance costs, in higher prices on all kinds of goods, in higher taxes for protection, prevention and re-habilitation and in added expenses for personal security.

One aspect of the explosive crime rates, as you know, has particular relevance to your profession. I refer to the abuse of drugs and the illegal traffic which supplies the growing ranks of users. The problem is not new, but from all indications, it has reached epidemic proportions.

Current figures reveal that, possibly, 12 million Americans have experimented with marijuana. Of this number, in 1969, about 2.4 million persons were believed to be frequent
users along with a hard core of 600,000 habitual users. In that year alone these 3 million persons may have consumed over $850 million worth of the substance.

Use of the powerful narcotics is not as widespread but it poses more complex problems. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare supplies figures which indicate that there are about 120,000 addicts in the United States; the estimate is believed to be on the conservative side. Indeed, figures provided by Congressional committees suggest that as many as 100,000 heroin addicts may be concentrated in New York City with addiction growing and afflicting an increasing proportion of young people. Of the officially reported heroin addicts in New York in 1968, 25 percent were under age 20. Tragically, many are under the age of 12 and some are even addicted at birth.

The desperate plight of these people and its relevance to crime is evident when we examine the vicious underworld
economy in which they are supplied with drugs. Each of the 100,000 addicts in New York requires about $60 worth of heroin per day. That adds up to a collective cost of addiction of $2 billion a year. At least half this amount is believed to be raised by the theft of stolen property. However, stolen goods can be sold at only 20 percent of value. In short, some $5 billion in thefts finances one-half the annual $2 billion bill for heroin purchases in New York. It has been estimated that as much as 50 percent of the city's crime can be attributed to the drug traffic. Project that, nationally, in terms of increases in prices due to theft-losses and the costs for additional police and other protective services; project it in terms of people murdered and lives maimed, distorted and wasted.

The growth of the epidemic is indicated by the 322 percent increase in the number of drug-arrests between 1960 and 1968. In the latter year, total arrests exceeded 162,000. Nearly half were for selling or possessing marijuana. Of the
78,000 arrested, however, only 244 were convicted under federal statutes and 169 under state laws. The convictions were confined, almost wholly, to "significant violators"—those who had actually engaged in illegal trafficking.

The courts were not only overwhelmed by the number of cases but mandatory sentences were not being imposed because they were regarded as unrealistic. Until this year, for example, possession of marijuana was itself a felony punishable by a mandatory minimum of two years' imprisonment and fines up to $20,000.

There was an evident need to draw a greater distinction in law between the operator in the illicit traffic on the one hand and, on the other, the foolish, the desperate and deeply disturbed who are the denizens of his captive market. In that market, the price of the cigarettes made out of $15 worth of marijuana gathered in Mexico is $2,500 on the streets of Boston.
The Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act, which Congress has just passed, does make the distinction. It provides mandatory penalties of five years to life imprisonment and a fine of $50,000 for professional criminals who traffic in narcotic drugs. Even traffickers with no hardened record of professional crime are subject to jail sentences of up to 15 years and fines to $25,000 for first offense. These penalties are doubled for persons found guilty of distributing drugs to young people under the age of 18.

At the same time, however, the act has removed the mandatory minimum penalty for using marijuana—as distinct from trafficking—and set a flexible jail term of up to one year and a fine at up to $5,000 with special treatment for first offenders. The courts thus can now exercise a sensible discretion. Significant to this distinction between profiteer and exploited in the new law is the estimate of a Congressional committee that 65 percent of the people who have experimented with marijuana have abandoned it altogether.
Some states are seeking to approach the drug problem, as it involves users, by placing reliance almost entirely on education and rehabilitation, rather than on punishment. Notable is a new law in Nebraska, which happens to be a State well acquainted with marijuana since it grows wild there in quantity. The provisions include a maximum jail sentence of seven days, combined with a mandatory course in the perils of drug use.

An aspect of the drug problem which I know is of particular concern to you is the diversion of legitimately manufactured drugs into illegal markets. One estimate recently cited in Congressional debate, for example, was that 50 percent of the 9 million amphetamines and barbituates legally produced in 1969 were diverted into illicit channels. To meet the problem, new legislation just passed by Congress, provides the Attorney General with authority to register and control the manufacture and distribution of drugs.
Laws for control of the drug traffic must be supplemented by an effort to get to the heart of the problem. The fundamental need is to dry up demand for drugs at the source and, particularly, at its youthful source. That means intensified efforts at rehabilitation of addicts or habitual users. It means preventive education for everyone else.

To date, efforts in this regard have been very limited. It was pointed out to a Senate committee earlier this year, for example, that only about 3,000 of the 100,000 addicts in New York City were receiving therapy for drug addiction. Yet, there is an economic rationale for such therapy apart from human considerations. Outpatient service to addicts cost about $1,000 a year per person. For inpatients, the cost is $3,500 per year, including treatment, food, clothing, and all basic necessities. These are, indeed, nominal costs when compared with the far greater price of the crime which is induced by addiction.
One of the Senate’s leading authorities on this problem, Senator Harold Hughes of Iowa, has urged a determined national rehabilitative effort and his efforts have evoked an initial response in the Congress. The Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of this year provides assistance to the states and municipalities in rehabilitation over the next three years. It authorizes $180 million to enable existing community mental health clinics to deal with addicts; $29 million for programs of education on the dangers of drug abuse and $85 million for special facilities in areas of high drug use.

Turning from drug abuse to the general problem of crime, I would note to you the recent passage of the omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act. It is a non-partisan measure which will provide more than $3.5 billion over the next three years. A large part of these funds will go as federal assistance to state and local law enforcement agencies. Some will go to improve prisons and other correctional facilities.
May I say that it is high time to rid the nation of its century-old Bastilles. Good sense tells us not to condone crime. Good sense also tells us to make the best of a bad situation. It tells us to replace those prisons which have deteriorated into houses of horror and whose principal achievement is too often the breeding of recidivists.

The legislation which has cleared the Senate this year will strengthen the arm of the law where it is most needed, on the sidewalks and street corners of cities and towns across the nation. It is the police officer on the beat, the lawman, who must discharge perhaps the most important responsibilities of all. It is he, the police officer, who must protect our families and neighbors, wives and loved ones and places of business. It is he, the police officer, who must respond to emergencies, to accidents and injuries, and to calls for help and assistance.
The police do a job that few citizens want to do. And by and large, they do it pretty well. To put it starkly, life in many parts of this country has become brutal and violent. And it is the policeman who by his work is forced to confront the abundance of social problems that have made life brutal and violent.

It is not an easy job. Indeed, it is performed at great risk to life and limb. In all last year, 96 policemen were killed while on duty. Over 35,000 of them suffered assaults. The risk has become greater each year. The policemen of America deserve and have every right to expect the cooperation and support of every American citizen. They are Americans who have legitimate grievances, aspirations, and rights. And just as he seeks to protect us from crime and violence—risking his life in the process—he is entitled to our protection and support.

Police work is a highly specialized profession. It requires skill, training and patience. It requires an aware-
ness of human nature as well as firm hand on the nightstick. The legislation which the Senate has now passed is a commitment to the policeman of the nation who, in performing their difficult duties in that fashion, make a great, but often too little appreciated, contribution to public safety and order.

The national responsibility regarding crime is inescapable. The national stake is high. Senate action during the current session constitutes, in my judgment, a substantial legislative response to one of the pressing needs of the nation. The legislation goes a long way in providing new approaches, additional funds and new legal curbs on crime. Much depends, now, on how it is handled by the federal administration and state and local authorities.

Senate Democrats and Republicans alike have recognized the problem of crime, heard the evidence, weighed the alternatives and acted deliberately. We have proceeded on the belief that the time-bomb of crime is not going to be
diffused by political bombast. We have tried to draw the fine line between firm enforcement and repression. In doing so we have tried to assure that this nation remains a society ruled by law.

If there are more Democrats than Republicans listed in favor of these measures, it does not mean that Democrats are tougher on crime or more concerned with the problems of crime. It signifies only that there are more Democrats than Republicans in the Senate. That, may I add, strikes me as a happy state of affairs for the nation. You will forgive me for saying in these otherwise non-partisan comments that I hope it will persist after the coming election.

Crime is not a thing apart. It is not the only stress which must be faced in this nation. As in the case of crime, there is also a high degree of agreement on the definition of other deep national difficulties. We agree generally, for example, that the physical environment of the nation--air,
water, and earth--has been dangerously abused. We agree that
the metropolitan cores are in grave trouble, that educational
opportunities are not adequate for all, nor are health services.
There is agreement, too, that the resources of the federal govern-
ment must be joined with the efforts of the states and local
jurisdictions in order to deal with these difficulties.

We do not yet have, however, an agreed sense of the
dimensions of some of the problems. Nor do we necessarily see
eye-to-eye on the relevance of various remedial actions. We do
not have, finally, a full acceptance of what is going to be
required in the way of reordering federal activity in order to
confront these problems. Yet, the alternative to such a redir-
ection, especially as it involves federal expenditures, is higher
taxes. That is a course which I believe must be rejected and
especially at this time of deepening recession.

The Administration and the Senate and House have
begun to bring about re-allocations in the budget. The process,
however, may well be a major preoccupation during the entire
decade. Any realistic effort of this kind starts with a frank
recognition of the enormous costs of the nation's foreign-military
policy or, to put it another way, the cost of safeguarding the
nation's security against threats from abroad. The largest
single item, of course, is Viet Nam. Whatever our respective
views on the involvement in Southeast Asia, there is no avoidance
of its fearful cost. It is the second most expensive war in our
history. It is exceeded only by World War II.

As of the beginning of this year, the direct cost of
the war to American taxpayers had reached about $110 billion.
That is twice the initial cost of the Korean conflict. It is
four times the original cost to the United States of World War I.

To these initial or original costs must be added the
secondary or lingering costs which extend beyond the cessation
of hostilities. They include interest payments on debts incurred
as a result of the war. They include veterans' and survivors'
benefits.
It is estimated that the final monetary price of the Viet Nam conflict to this nation will be in excess of $350 billion, with the impact still being felt until the end of the 21st century. Compared with other federal expenditures during the ten year period of the war, the estimated cost of Viet Nam to the United States is 50 times the amount spent for housing and community development, 14 times the amount spent for all levels of education and 10 times the amount spent for Medicare and medical assistance.

It is small wonder that the termination of the Vietnamese involvement is generally regarded as a keystone to financing the solution of other national difficulties. In recognition of this reality, the Administration did reduce the budget for Viet Nam and other military purposes in the current fiscal year by about $14 billion. However, after meeting uncontrol-lable increase in the budget, only $4.6 billion remained from the savings for redistribution to non-military purposes.
Congress has gone a step further than the Administration by increasing allowances further for housing, pollution control, transportation, education and the like. This action has evoked cries of extravagance but I am persuaded that the Congress will still manage to cut back the President's over-all budget this year, as it did last year by $6.3 billion. It was able to do so then largely by making Congressional cuts in military expenditures and by removing some of the frills of the space and other programs of a less pressing nature.

Clearly, there are differences between the Administration and the Congress in matters of this kind; that is inevitable. There are no monopolies on wisdom. The fact that there is an Administration of one party and a Congress of another, however, has not impeded the flow of federal business. What it has done is to produce a most careful scrutiny of how that business flows. In my judgment, this scrutiny, by both the President and the Congress, serves the best interests of the people of the nation.
The dual approach is especially needed with respect to the Vietnamese war. The President is to be commended for his most recent effort to kindle negotiations in Paris—an effort which has had wide encouragement and support in the Congress. He is also to be commended for scaling down the U. S. participation in the Vietnamese conflict over the past year or so with a considerable saving of life.

Nevertheless, the war goes on. The casualties continue to accumulate. The computers of the war's cost click on at an annual rate of many billions. The persistence of this tragic conflict is a divisive drain which dilutes our national energies and inhibits our ability to give full attention to the inner difficulties of this nation.
Nor do we give these difficulties their due when politics degenerate into personal attacks and recrimination. I refer not to occasional excesses of political zeal, but, rather, to the deliberate sowing of confusion and division. I refer to loose words, along with loose guns. I refer to the undermining of our national institutions by distortions for political profit.

The problems which confront us call not for fierce divisions but for the highest possible degree of unity among our people, young and old, soldier, student and worker, men and women, President and Congress, and people and government. That is the fundamental need of this nation—to summon ourselves need to a new unity. The can be met. The country demands it; the Republic deserves no less.