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Statement of Senator Mansfield - The Senate Majority Policy Committee

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001
Mr. President:

Since the beginning of this session, the Senate Majority Policy Committee has been assessing the principal issues which confront the nation. It has been the Committee's purpose to try to establish a general focus for the efforts of the Majority during the current Congress.

On February 22nd, the Senate Democratic Policy Committee met and adopted a Resolution of Senate Majority Purpose. The content of the resolution is summarized in a statement which, on instructions of the Committee, I issued to the press at the conclusion of Monday's meeting. I ask unanimous consent that this press release be printed at this point in the Record.

Pursuant to the instructions of the Policy Committee, there was convened a conference of the entire Senate Majority membership on February 23rd. The Resolution which had been adopted by the Policy Committee the previous day was presented to this, caucus. I ask unanimous consent that there be printed at the conclusion of my remarks the text of an opening statement which I made to the Democratic conference.

While a vote of endorsement of the Resolution was not required from the Conference under the rules, such a vote was so moved and, after a full and complete discussion, a vote was taken on the question of endorsing the Committee's resolution. An absolute majority was recorded in favor and, as requested by the Conference, the rolls were kept open to permit those not attending, but so desiring, to register their position in the records of the Conference. The count, as of now, on the Resolution of Majority Purpose is as follows: In favor of Part One of the Resolution, 35; in
favor of Part One, with the exception of the last four words, "...in a time certain," 2; against Part One of the Resolution, 12; abstentions, 2; absent, 4.

With the exceptions noted above, the support for the full text of the Democratic Resolution of Purpose for the 92nd Congress was unanimous among the Democratic Members of the Senate.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of this Resolution of Majority Purpose for the 92nd Congress, as approved by the Senate Democratic Conference on February 23, 1971 be included at this point in the Record.
STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D. MONTANA)

For the benefit of those Members not present at the Democratic Conference in May 1969, notably the new Members, I feel it is desirable to read excerpts from the minutes of that meeting.

"...Since the beginning of the session, we have been examining in the Policy Committee the situation of the Democratic Majority in the Senate in the light of the Republican occupancy of the Presidency.

"In present circumstances, as we examined them in the Policy Committee, a new approach by the Party in the Senate was indicated. We found, for example, that Democratic Senators were asking from time to time for a statement of the position of the Leadership on national issues before the Senate. Heretofore, Democratic Presidents had largely supplied that yardstick.

"...It was agreed that an effort should be made to delineate Democratic positions in the Senate on certain issues of significance in which there existed a substantial degree of unity among members of the Party.

"...We are--all of us--aware of the difficulties which are inherent in trying to find common ground amidst our diversities. Yet, we believe the effort must be made. The Policy Committee is the political arm of the Democratic Conference of the Senate and it has a basis in law for the performance of the function. In addition, as presently constituted--that is, combined with the Legislative
Review Committee—the Committee is accurately representative of the principal philosophical inclinations and the geographic derivations of the party in the Senate.

"Lest there be any doubt, I want to make it very plain that the Committee will not intrude, in any way, upon the functions of any of the Legislative Committees. On the contrary, it will continue to follow its customary practice with regard to the regular scheduling of legislation for floor action...

"May I stress here the point that the Legislative Committees will, as always, delineate the legislation for floor consideration. What we are suggesting is in the nature of a political supplement to that responsibility.

"In a similar fashion, the Committee has not the slightest intention of presuming to replace a Senator's individual judgment with a Party judgment. We may offer a Committee view, but members will continue to vote on the issues on the basis of their conscience and wisdom. Indeed, even when a position has been delineated by the Policy Committee, its individual members will still vote as they see fit when the issue reaches the Senate floor.

"In conclusion, I would point out that in addition to the unanimous endorsement of this new approach by the members of the Policy Committee, the chairmen of the Legislative Committees, with whom I met on May 7, also agreed, without objection, to this proposed course."
"Senator Holland moved that the Conference approve this use of the Policy Committee as a formulator of Party policy. The motion was approved unanimously by standing vote. In announcing the vote, Senator Mansfield again stressed that a Policy Committee position, although stated as a Party position, was not binding on individual Members."
February 23, 1971

STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA) AT THE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

The Democratic Policy Committee proceeded to identify 15 major issues during the 91st Congress which it thought deserved substantial Democratic support. These ranged from the National Commitments Resolution in May of 1969, to the proposal of June 24, 1969, that sought—successfully—to link the temporary surtax extension to tax reform and tax relief. They included a Resolution calling for a substantial reduction of U.S. troops in Europe adopted in July of 1969; a suggestion to increase social security benefits by 15% together with a $100 minimum benefit payment; a proposed mutual freeze with proper verification on the deployment of new offensive and defensive strategic nuclear weapons in April of 1970; a series of actions on the economy, one advocating the use of jawboning and standby wage and price authority, another in June, 1970, seeking Presidential use of the authority over credit and interest controls as provided by Congress, and another submitting a full economic report in September of 1970. These are some of the issues with which the Policy Committee identified itself in the last Congress.

Its action took various shapes, all of which were approved under the terms endorsed unanimously by this caucus in 1969 and affirmed again at the beginning of this Congress. It was understood that the Policy Committee would seek out only issues that would command a two-thirds majority of the Committee itself. Because of the broad philosophical and
geographical makeup of the Committee, it was thought that two-thirds would provide sufficient backing among the Senate Democrats to identify any such issue in terms of a Senate Majority position.

It should be stressed that actions of the Policy Committee are recommendations only. No member of the Caucus is bound by a Policy Committee judgment. How each individual decision of the Policy Committee is conveyed is a matter for the Leadership and the Policy Committee to determine on an issue-by-issue basis. In the past, Caucuses have been convened and advised of a decision; floor announcements have been made and press conferences have been held—all for the purpose of communicating the actions of the Policy Committee to Democratic members, the Senate and the public.

On yesterday, the Policy Committee again acted and instructed me, as Chairman, to notify the press immediately of the action. The Committee also requested that the Caucus be convened for the purpose of submitting the matter directly to all Senate Democrats. What the action concerns is a general Majority policy resolution which recommends certain issues as fundamental to any agenda of the 92nd Congress. It was in this context that the Democratic Policy Committee unanimously approved the resolution submitted here today. It is a general Democratic Policy Committee statement on major issues. What reaction, if any, the Caucus decides to register is, of course, up to the Caucus. The Policy Committee, after all, is fully responsible to the Caucus.

It should be said, however, that if there are constructive initiatives to be offered on the major issues confronting the country, then it seems to me incumbent upon us as the Senate Majority to identify those
issues wherever and whenever possible by policy statements. We believe it is helpful to state what are considered to be some of the most significant national issues and the general approach most of us as Democrats are inclined to take with regard to these issues. In my judgment, we owe it to the President and we owe it to the country to do so. As the party in control of the Senate in the legislative branch we have a responsibility to the nation, along with a Republican Administration.

It was in that context that the Policy Committee acted on yesterday. The members spoke, may I say, in a highly unified voice after a thoughtful debate and discussion. They spoke, in my judgment, in a most constructive and responsible voice. While they spoke as Democrats, they eschewed any suggestion of partisanship for the sake of partisanship. That is how it has been; that is how it will continue to be insofar as I am concerned.

The resolution which the Policy Committee adopted on yesterday is a resolution of Senate purpose for the 92nd Congress. It represents an attempt to focus our joint efforts during the next two years. I will now read the resolution.

As a follow-up to this resolution, the Committee would hope to set forth specifics in additional resolutions of the Policy Committee from time to time as these issues emerge in the Senate. In this case, as in all cases, the actions of the Policy Committee are for the guidance of Members only. In no case will the jurisdiction of any standing committee be infringed, impaired or encroached upon in any fashion. Indeed, on yesterday, when the Majority Whip proposed a discussion of an increase in social security benefits as a
subject for consideration by the Policy Committee—a matter for which all Members have great sympathy—he was designated by the Committee to discuss the matter with the Chairman of the Finance Committee (Senator Long). That is the way the Committee has always operated. I reiterate, there will be no infringement on the legislative responsibilities of any standing committee.

It is in this framework that this matter is brought before you. It is hoped that members of the Caucus will understand the thrust of the resolution which has just been presented, weigh its significance and give us any reactions which they may have.
RESOLUTION OF SENATE MAJORITY PURPOSE IN THE 92ND CONGRESS

The Majority Policy Committee of the United States Senate, having noted with deep concern the burdens which are imposed on the people of the nation by the continuing involvement in the war in Indochina, by the decline in the economy and by the unsatisfactory state of the public services--federal, state and local--and by the continuing fear of citizens for their freedom and safety;

RESOLVES, That it is the sense of the Committee that in the 92nd Congress the Senate Majority should work to achieve the following purposes:

1. To end the involvement in Indochina and to bring about the withdrawal of all U.S. forces and the release of all prisoners in a time certain;

2. To stop the inflation and reverse the recession and, further, to take all possible interim measures to alleviate the condition of those who are the principal victims of these failures of public leadership--businessmen, the unemployed, farmers, social security and other retired pensioners and families of fixed, moderate or inadequate income;

3. To contribute to a streamlining of federal-state financial relationships which will insure more equitable distribution of costs and a more efficient flow of public services to the people as, for example, in welfare, health, safety, transportation, recreation, education--provided always that fiscal responsibility for the expenditures of federal revenues shall not be impaired.

4. To bring about by close oversight of present procedures by streamlining and/or by consolidation where necessary, a more effective operation of the legislative and executive branches of the federal government;

5. To strengthen police training and compensation; and the court system, including probation, parole; and correctional institutions.

RESOLVES, Further, that in pursuit of these objectives, the Committee urges full support wherever possible by both Senate Democrats and Republicans of the initiatives of the President, the Senate Committees and Members, and the House, which may be pertinent to these ends.