1-21-1971

Statement of Senator Mansfield to Democratic Caucus

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.
Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches/959

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Mike Mansfield Papers at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mike Mansfield Speeches by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
We meet at a time when the sounds of war in Indochina again grow ominous. We meet just as the official indicators of the nation’s economic activity register an overall decline for 1969--the first decline in a dozen years.

Let me say that reports of an intensified U. S. military role in Cambodia were not unexpected; nor were they needed to remind us that there is still a deadly war in Indochina. We are reminded by the casualties--a hundred this week, a hundred the week before, a hundred next week--the continuum stretches back years and reaches forward into the indefinite future. As Members of the Senate, we know those casualties not as statistical counts. We know them as the sons, husbands and friends of our constituents.

The Senate did not need, either, the statistics of economic contraction to make the point of a recession. Letters of the unemployed to Senators tell the story and they tell it in human terms. Senators have long been aware of the trend in the economy. We have some sense of what its prolonged persistence portends for the nation.

Abroad, the war in Indochina. At home, the recession. We do not establish the overriding questions of the 92nd Congress. They will be there to confront us at the beginning. Together with the President and the House, it is our responsibility to see to it that they are not there at the end.

To be sure, from the outset of his Administration, the President searched for an end to the war. He has striven to reduce U. S. casualties in Indochina and to cut the costs of the involvement. His efforts have achieved a great deal in these respects. He has withdrawn tens of thousands of Americans from Viet Nam. In so doing, he has had the encouragement of Members of both parties in the Senate. Insofar as the Majority is concerned, he will continue to have full support for any--any--further reductions in the presence of the
United States forces—ground, air, sea or whatever, in this ill-fated war.

For the present, however, it is clear that we are still deeply in the war and we are still committed to remain until the end, whenever that may be. It is the form of the U. S. involvement which has been changed; not the involvement itself. In so saying, I do not minimize the significance of that change. It has saved U. S. lives by reducing our presence on the ground. But it has also enlarged the area of our assumed responsibility, from South Viet Nam where it was at the beginning of the last Congress to include, now, all of Indochina. If we have less men in Southeast Viet Nam we have at the same time consigned to those who remain a larger geographic area of responsibility. If we have taken Americans out of zones of combat in South Viet Nam, we have sent them by air or however to where they have not been before—into Laos and, apparently, within inches of the ground in Cambodia—in connection with the expansion of the war into those other two countries. In short, we may be in a war of different tactics but it is still a war in which we are involved. It is still a mistaken war. Americans are still dying in that mistaken war which does not involve the vital interests of the United States.

The Senator shares with the President the responsibility for this situation. To be sure, in a most proper exercise of Constitutional function, Cooper-Church was an effort to inhibit the deepening of the American involvement. Yet, recent news accounts suggest a stretched and, perhaps, distorted interpretation of the intent of that legislation in Indochina.

In this Congress, therefore, there must be even greater vigilance. Every effort must be made, in concert with the President, to bring the actions of all of the agencies of this government into line with the desires of this nation—as expressed through its elected officials—to curb the involvement—to close the involvement in Indochina.
Until the tragedy is ended, the Senate’s concern with Indochina cannot end and will not end. There are but two vital interests of this nation, in my judgment, which justify the continuance of any U. S. military presence in this mistaken war. One is the safe return of the prisoners-of-war. The second is the safety of all remaining U. S. forces from Viet Nam, as they are withdrawn in an orderly fashion. They are responsibilities which must take precedence over the interests of other governments. The President will have my support and I believe the support of Senators on both sides of the aisle in the singular pursuit of these objectives through negotiations.

With regard to the economy, both the President and the Congress—together, I would hope—must seek out new initiatives to erect a firm bulwark against rising prices and to move the nation out of the economic doldrums. Ways must be sought and found to strengthen the government’s resolve and effectiveness in this connection. The human consequences of the economic recession can no longer be ignored. If the Executive Branch has its responsibilities in this connection, so, too, has the Congress. Therefore, the Leadership makes this request now of all who will serve as Chairmen of Committees of the Senate which deal with economic questions. I ask that they put their Committees to work without delay, on the basis of the President’s views and their own initiatives, in order to develop concrete recommendations for the Senate. The Majority Leadership lobbies every cooperation of the Majority Policy Committee in moving those recommendations to the floor.
There will be neither a cut in prices nor an end to the recession, in my judgment, unless the Federal government keeps a rein on expenditures which are currently so wasteful of the nation's resources. An end to the war in Viet Nam, for example, would be the greatest single foreseeable contribution to the economic welfare and social well-being of the nation. But there are other aspects, too, of our foreign relations in which gaping holes have been torn in the nation's purse; they are holes which must be closed.

In this connection, it would be my hope that the Senate will expand upon the steps which were taken last year to curb antiquated national commitments overseas. We should do our best to develop legislation which will be in concert with the Nixon "low profile, self-support Doctrine." There is, for example, still the case of the massive deployment of American military under NATO. An encampment of about 500,000 U. S. military personnel and dependents in Europe in the year 1971 is in consonance with neither a "low profile" nor the great capacity of the European nations for self-support. In its present form, the deployment is a wasteful anachronism. At a time of economic recession at home it is still being maintained in a most extravagant fashion. An estimated $14 billion pours out of the federal purse every year to sustain this establishment. I would hope, therefore, that the President would join with the Senate to stem this outflow of resources which are badly needed for urgent purposes within the nation. However, it is done, by legislation if necessary, ways must be found to bring about a sharp reduction in this costly deployment.
The 92nd Congress, I believe, would also be performing a necessary public service by continuing to seek to cut expenditures for exotic weapons which are of dubious utility or are already in excessive supply. Over the years, billions, perhaps, tens of billions have been wasted in this fashion, as the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. Proxmire) so ably illustrated in the last Congress. The fact is that we can ill afford that kind of waste in a military budget which, at $75 billion annually, already chews the lion's share of federal revenues and contributes greatly to the rise in prices.

As the session begins, an agenda of carry-over items from the last Congress will confront the Senate. These include the Supersonic Transport whose final disposition fell between the clashing views of the two houses. There is also the matter of the Family Assistance Plan, which, of national importance and of deep Presidential interest. The subject is one for priority consideration and the joint leadership--Republican and Democratic--has pledged every effort to try to see that it is so treated.

An increase in Social Security payments is very high on the list of carry-over business. The Senate agreed to a 10% increase and a minimum payment of $100 at the close of last session. It would be my hope, therefore, that the final enactment of this proposal can be accomplished before early spring and that it will be back-dated to January 1, 1971.
The new Congress will also be confronted by many new questions. Among those already unveiled is the matter of "revenue-sharing." It is not so much a new concept as it is a new phrase. In one way or another, the federal government has been "sharing" revenues with the states and localities for decades and for a great variety of purposes. The Subcommittee on Intergovernment Relations has held general hearings on new approaches to this old relationship and the President has urged consideration of the question. It seems to me that the key question is the integrity of the expenditures which may be made at the State and local levels out of federally collected funds. The phrase "revenue-sharing" must not become a cover-all for lack of accountability and fiscal irresponsibility. The federal revenues are the last bulwark between this nation and economic chaos and they must be safeguarded. Moreover, we should also bear in mind that the hard-pressed federal taxpayer and the hard-pressed state taxpayer is one and the same; he must not be squeezed further, in the name of "revenue sharing." Indeed, some assurance of relief for the small property owner who pays a variety of taxes in every community of this country may well be in order in connection with any new federal revenue-sharing scheme. Finally, a preliminary study of the range of burdens which are now borne by taxpayers and the disparities between states and within states might well be a necessary preliminary to any intelligent new legislation on "revenue sharing."

The continued health of our Federal system certainly requires special efforts to restore fiscal balance as among Federal, State, and local governments. Just what shape such a proposal finally takes, however, should be determined only after the most careful investigation by the Congress.
That is not to say that Congress can ignore the enormous financial burdens which now fall upon the localities and on the metropolitan areas in particular. There is no state in the Union which now lacks these areas and the solutions of their problems are becoming ever more national in scope. In short, the issue is not whether the federal government should help more than it is already helping. It is how shall the federal government help?

Initiatives which are related to this question may be expected from the new Congress; additional innovative efforts to curb pollution, to stimulate housing, to improve educational opportunities and medical services and to extend comprehensive health insurance in the nation.

The war, the economy and the great range of issues at hand establish a most formidable responsibility for the Senate in the next two years. There is no gainsaying the fact that the practices and procedures of the Senate—notably, as they operated towards the end of last year—did not appear, at times, to be equal to that responsibility.

To be sure, the new Congressional Reorganization Act will be in effort this year. Moreover, the Joint Leadership has already given its endorsement to an array of procedural innovations which were suggested by Senators Cranston, Hughes, Saxbe and Schweiker and I have asked these Members to continue to pursue their explorations with the fresh viewpoints of relatively recent arrivals in the Senate. Other proposals may be expected from other sources.

When that has been said, however, it seems to me that the Senate must still confront the reality that the cloture rule is a fundamental part of the difficulty. This rule enjoins a debate so protracted that in times of sharp or multiple disagreement it is an open invitation to evasion and an
inaction bordering on breakdown. It permits the consumption of such a chunk of the total available time on one or two issues that the Senate cannot accommodate to the balance of the great load of work which is now a continuing reality of the Congress. The need for a change in Rule XXII, it seems to me, was demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt during the last session. The time for a change is now.

As the Members of the Conference know, I have long favored 3/5's cloture. I hope that the Senate will be able to look to the merits of a proposal of this nature this year and would do so at the outset of the session and without prolonged debate.

Whatever changes may be made in procedures, however, I must stress that it is the Leadership's considered judgment, today, as it was, when this Leadership began a decade ago, that there is no substitute for comity and cooperation among the members of the Senate--all of the Members of the Senate and both sides of the aisle. Insofar as the leadership is concerned, it will continue to function on that basis, and no other. There will be no steam rollers; no parliamentary shenanigans. There is no indication in the legislative history of the Senate of recent decades that such tactics are effective in creating a body of constructive legislation. Even if there were, the Leadership would still not be a party to them.

We are members of a majority, to be sure, but before that we are--all of us--members of the Senate with one vote each and each entitled to equal consideration. What emerges from the Senate in the coming Congress will bear the mark of a Majority. It will not be, however, a majority composed of Democrats alone; nor of Republicans alone. It will be a majority of the Senate.
To be sure, there are differences among us, differences between Democrats, between the parties and between the Senate and the President. Differences, notwithstanding, we have--all of us--a great deal in common. There is a far higher stake than the fate of this Majority. There is a far higher stake than the political fortunes of any one of us. There is the stake in the future of America and our individual responsibilities to that future.

Insofar as the Senate is concerned, therefore, it would be my hope that the politics of 1972 will be left to November 1972. It would be my hope that the concern of the Congress no less than the Administration will be with the needs of the nation now and in the years ahead. That is what the people ask of us. That is what they have a right to expect. That is what the Majority Leadership sets as its single purpose in this Senate of the 92nd Congress.