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Remarks of Senator Mansfield at the Funeral of Senator Richard B. Russell

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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January 24, 1971

REMARKS OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

at the Funeral of

Senator Richard Brevard Russell

What is fifty years in public life?

It is the end of a war long ago and a young lawyer's practice in a town where the railroad runs through cotton fields. It is the lift of a first election and a seat in a State legislature.

It is an ear given to the past and to the words of a family rich in the law, the bible and the bitter fruits of an ancient war.

It is an ear given to the present, to neighbors who need and do not need, to the rich and the poor, to the harsh and the gentle, to the black and to the white. It is the Speaker's chair in the Georgia House and the learning of the machinery through which freedom seeks to speak.

What is fifty years in public life?

It is the confidence of a people whose confidence in all else has been shaken. It is the agony of an empty public purse when many hands stretch out for help.

It is a fury of frustration as the land dries up and factories stand still even as men go in want and there are the sounds of violent discontent rising. It is the weighing of plea against plea, hope against hope, need against need. It is a mandate to decide, whether it is easy to decide or hard.

It is a Governor's House in a nation's dark hours.

What is fifty years in public life?

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It is a long journey to a nation's capitol and to the Senate of the United States. It is the mixing of an old experience and a new.

It is another war, another, and another yet, and a militant defense of the nation's defense.

It is the pleas of a people remembered out of the past and the means, at last to respond to them.

It is all the ways that States draw strength from the federal government.

It is school lunches and food for the hungry, the farmer helped, the roads built, the schools expanded and the dignity of hope reborn.

It is the mastery of new legislative machinery and, as conscience compels, its vigorous use.

It is, at last, the Chair of the Senate of the United States and the high trust of a nation.

Fifty years in public life. . .

It closes where it began, where it is green and there is the smell of pines.

Richard Brevard Russell

Winder, Georgia

A Senator of the United States.