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January 19, 1973

REMARKS OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

In addressing the Senate Democratic Conference on January 3, I made the following comment:

"The Senate must be prepared to proceed in its own way. When conscience so dictates we must seek to initiate and advance public programs from the Senate and to revise proposals of the Executive Branch.

"It is my expectation that the House of Representatives will join in this approach. To that end, the Senate Leadership will seek to establish close and continuing liaison with that of the House. Looking to the needs of the entire nation, moreover, the Leadership will put out new lines of communication to the Governors Conference, notably to its Democratic Members and the National Democratic Party. We have much to learn from these sources about conditions in the nation. Their contribution can help to improve the design of federal activity to meet more effectively the needs of all states."

Our meeting here today, may I say, puts flesh on the bones of those words. I am delighted that we are able to get together. I hope that this is but the first of ~~many~~ similar meetings. Distances and our individual preoccupations make frequent meetings of this kind most difficult. I do not expect Governors to be running down to Washington every week. Nor do I expect Mr. Strauss to be running down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol every day. I do think, however, that we must try to establish some means of continuing communication. It would be my suggestion--and it is one which we can pursue further in subsequent discussions--that the Chairman of the Democratic Governors Conference will designate a specific staff person, that the Speaker will do likewise and I will do the same to be in continuous contact with one another.

In that fashion, the Democratic Governors will have a point for the input of ideas and perspective from the states into the problems which may be coming before the Senate or House and which are of particular concern to them. Conversely, through the same channels, the Leadership of the Congress will be able to keep the Democratic Governors informed as to what is transpiring within the Democratic majorities in the Congress. Through this mechanism, we can, hopefully, establish both a clear set of policy priorities and a related legislative budget behind which our party will stand united.

Now, what about Mr. Strauss and the Democratic National Committee? I am aware that in the past, there have not always been the closest ties between the Hill and the Hollow of Foggy Bottom. I would hope that we can change that and, to that end, the Chairmen of the National Committee will meet with the Congressional Leadership on a regular basis. In that fashion, we may be able to interrelate more effectively our responses to the problems of the people of the nation--all the people--problems which should preoccupy Democrats, whether inside the Senate and House or outside of it. Whenever Governor Bumpers is in town, moreover, I hope he will join in those meetings and, in that fashion, start to breathe a little new life into the Democratic spirit of '76.