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Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. AIKEN. I yield.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I commend the distinguished Senator from Vermont for the temperate statement he has made today, which fits in with his call for bipartisanship several days ago.

I note that on page 6 of his speech the Senator states:

The cease-fire is only the bare beginnings of peace in Indochina.

How true. And just how tenuous that cease-fire is, of course, is manifest in the fact that in South Vietnam, in Cambodia, and in Laos the fighting is still going on.

So I commend the distinguished Senator for his remarks, because what he does is to raise a flag of caution. What he is primarily interested in, as I am—and I am sure the entire Senate and the total American population—is three things: One, a cease-fire in fact as well as in being; two, the continued withdrawal of all U.S. military personnel from Vietnam, a process which is in operation at the present time—and it is my understanding that the number remaining at the moment is somewhere between 11,000 and 12,000—and, three, the return of our POW's and the recoverable missing in action.

Those are the three most important factors. When we reach those objectives, then I think we can begin talking about assistance, if any such proposal is made, under article XXI of the agreement. But I think that in the meantime we ought to give the man downtown—the President—a chance to work these things through, following this tentative settlement—and that is all it is at the moment. We must try to make certain that there will not be a return to warfare in which we will become engaged and that there is an opportunity to establish a basis for a peace in that part of the world not only for the indigenous peoples concerned but for this Nation as well.

The distinguished Senator says on page 7 of his speech:

There will be plenty of room for debate and discussion over the form that the reconstruction presence in Indochina should take.

Again, the Senator is correct. There will be a right time for a proposal to be made, based on the circumstances which exist at that time. Those circumstances, to get back to what originally was said, depend on a cease-fire in fact, depend on the total withdrawal of all U.S. military personnel and the release of all prisoners of war and recoverable missing in action.

As the distinguished Senator says in his speech:

But the purpose will be to discourage more war and to encourage more peace.

The Senator is right. I hope that his speech has been listened to and will be read by those who are interested in that part of the world and our role in it and that they will be aware of the fact that the war is not over; that there is only a tenuous truce; that we still have POW's and recoverable MIA's in North and South Vietnam, in Cambodia, and in Laos; that we still have between 11,000 and 12,000 military personnel to be withdrawn, and that the truce at the moment is at best delicate; it is far from being a cease-fire, in fact.

I would hope we would follow the advice of the distinguished Senator from Vermont; that we would withhold our own fire for the moment, at least, and give the President a chance, based on the facts as they exist and in accord with what I have stated this afternoon, to present to the Congress a proposal, a proposal which I am sure Congress will dissect and go into thoroughly, and a proposal on which Congress itself will have to make a judgment, as well as the President.

I thank the Senator for yielding.

Mr. AIKEN. Mr. President, I take this time to thank the majority leader for the remarks he has made and to state that I do not regard the Paris conference as even being a near approach to Utopia. There will be problems and violations of the agreement which has been reached, but we have made one step and I want to make plain that we cannot consider seriously any expenditures for reconstruction, and so forth, until all of our prisoners of war have been released.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I am in accord with the views just expressed by the distinguished Senator. As he knows, for years I have had three objectives, which I have mentioned and which I cannot reiterate too often. I have sought for years to bring about a cease-fire, not only in Vietnam, but in all of Indochina. I have sought for years to bring about the extrication of our forces from Vietnam and Indochina. I have sought for years to bring about the release of the prisoners of war and the missing in action.

These objectives seem—and I emphasize the word "seem"—to be on the way to a final solution, which may well be contingent on the "investment in peace" in all of Indochina. What the President said about an "investment in peace" may well be part of the price of ending this ghastly war, an objective so much desired by all of us and paid for over such a long period of time by over 303,000 Americans wounded in combat, by almost 46,000 Americans killed in combat, by 10,300 Americans dead as the result of nonhostile action, by an overall total of almost 360,000 American casualties in this war.

Concurrent with that human cost is the monetary cost of between \$130 billion and \$140 billion to date, a cost which will eventually amount to between \$350 billion and \$450 billion, and which will saddle the people of this Nation well into the next century.

It is good, indeed, that at long last this longest, most tragic and second most costly war in all our history may be com-

ing to an end. In the words of Dr. Kissinger, in his superb exposition at his press conference in mid-January, it is time that "Together with healing the wounds of Indochina we can begin to heal the wounds of America."

Subject to various criteria which I am working on at the present time, I think we ought to give the President's proposals, when and if they come up, every reasonable consideration, because our chief objective, as I am sure it is his, is to bring about, finally, peace and stability in Indochina. It would be our hope and desire to cooperate with the President of the United States in his efforts to embark on the "decade of peace" which he has stressed so often during this administration.

I thank the distinguished Senator.