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Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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Mr. HARRY F. BYRD, JR. Mr. President, I yield to the distinguished majority leader.

Mr. MANSFIELD. I thank the distinguished Senator from Virginia.

Mr. President, I shall support the pending amendment, because it is in line with the statement made by Dr. Henry Kissinger when he met with a group of Senators in this building after his return in January, I believe, and it is in line with statements made by the President of the United States, to wit, that before any action was taken, the administration would present to Congress any proposal which had been tentatively agreed to or which was under the most serious consideration at that time.

But, Mr. President, in accepting or rejecting the amendment, we will not dispose of the question of aid to North Vietnam or, indeed, to all of Indochina. That question will arise and arise again in the Senate until it is faced on the merits of the issue. That is as it should be; and that is as it will be. So, I want to set forth my position at this time on the substance of the question.

I have already expressed my full support of the President's negotiating effort which has brought about a tentative cease-fire in Vietnam and Laos, a withdrawal of U.S. Forces from Vietnam, and the return of the prisoners of war. As an essential of the success of those negotiations, the President asked for an invest-
ment in peace. A part of that investment, as he made clear, is in the form of a blanket authorization of the war's "hearth" throughout Indochina.

There are those who are against that aid, who would find fault with the President. It is, in part, a reluctance to go along with his proposal to provide postwar assistance to North Vietnam. It is an understandable reluctance. In the face of the cost, as they did with regard to Germany and Japan at the end of World War II and as they do at the end of every war. Feelings aside, the fact remains, Mr. President, that we paid a terrible price, in a futile effort to fight this war to an end: 303,000 Americans wounded in combat, almost 46,000 Americans killed in combat, 10,300 Americans dead as a result of nonhostile action, overall 260,000 American casualties, including more than 25,000 paraplegics, quadriplegics, or otherwise disabled men as they have been called. The monetary cost? We have spent between $130 and $140 billion to date; the eventual full cost as assembled men as they are leveled; millions made suffering.

It seems to me, almost an understandable reluctance, as a measure of decency, as a share of our responsibility for developing international peace, and as a contribution to the healing of the wounds of a terrible war. But I cannot and I will not vote for funds for reconstruction in North Vietnam or South Vietnam or wherever in Indochina to put out great sums to pay for continual bombing runs over Cambodia which risk the ruin of more American lives. Unless this last-gasp practice ends forthright, the war in Indochina will not be ended. In the circumstances, I can see little point in supporting any aid program for any part of Indochina.

Mr. PROXMIRE. Will the Senator from Montana yield briefly?

Mr. MANSFIELD. Yes, indeed.

Mr. PROXMIRE. May I ask the majority leader in this institution, in whose part I place a series of conditions on his support for aid to North Vietnam, if he feels that the Byrd amendment as modified, and as such is dramatically improved, would not receive his support? As the amendment reads now, aid to North Vietnam shall be prohibited unless specifically authorized hereafter by Congress.

Mr. MANSFIELD. I have indicated my full support for the Byrd amendment as modified, because it is strengthening and recognizes the responsibility of Congress. It fits in very well with Dr. Henry A. Kissinger told us when he met with Senators in this part of the Capitol in late January, at which time he said that any proposals which would be forthcoming would first be sent to Congress for consideration, discussion, debate, and decision. The President of the United States has said the same thing. What we are doing is based on what has been said before, but putting it down in the form of an amendment which will have the effect of law. Could the Senator yield a little further, let me say I am delighted to hear this. Earlier, I had said—but I was misinformed—that I understood the majority leader would support the Byrd amendment. That statement of mine was in error and I am happy that it was. I now understand that the distinguished majority leader will support the Byrd amendment.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Yes indeed.

Mr. TOWER. Mr. President, will the Senator from Montana yield?

Mr. MANSFIELD. I yield.

Mr. TOWER. I might note that not only did Dr. Kissinger and the President both say they expected to get the authorization of Congress for any such proposals, but they made it clear to North Vietnam, to Paris, that Congress approval would have to be forthcoming.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Yes, I think the communiqué by Presidents Thieu and Nguen Van Thieu before last said in effect—I will have to paraphrase it freely—something to the effect that each President would have to talk separately with their respective congresses.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the Record the text of the statement I made in the Senate on this subject on page 172.

There being no objection the statement was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

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."

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 remind us of caution especially interested in, as I am—and I am sure the entire Senate and the whole American population—of three things: in fact as well as in being; two, the continued withdrawal of all U.S. military personnel from Vietnam, a promise made 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.

These are the three most important factors. When we reach those objectives, then I think we can begin talking about assistance, if any such proposal it is made, under article XXI of the agreement. But I think that in the meantime we ought to give the majority leaders—their time 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 be engaged and that the unique opportunity to establish a base 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. 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 distinguished 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 non-hostile 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 $120 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 all our history may be coming to an end. In the words of Dr. Kissinger, in his superb exposition on 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.