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Senator Mansfield - Kick-Off Dinner

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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It seems that to make a public statement at this time means to make a reference to Watergate. All the roads lead in that direction. The chickens of last November have all come home to roost on that perch.

But I am not going to dwell on an American tragedy—a Watergate tragedy—now in the hands of the courts and the Ervin Committee. It could not be in better hands. Judge Sirica knew what he was about. Senators Ervin, Talmadge, Inouye know what they are about and so, too, may I say, do their three Republican colleagues, Senators Baker, Gurney, and Weicker.

There is only one point to underscore tonight. It is the make-up of the Ervin Committee. It is the numbers. It is the ratio. There are four Democrats and three Republicans on the Committee.
A single vote separates four from three but it tells a world of difference.

That one vote is a measure of the margin of a modest Democratic majority which exists in the Senate in the 93rd Congress as it does in the House.

That one vote affirms the presence of the counterfoil of a Democratic Congress to the dangers of unilateral Executive power during the remaining three years of a Republican Administration.

That one vote attests to the struggle of the Democratic Congressional Majorities to hold back the ruthless demolition of the structure of human concern which this party has labored to construct.

That one vote on the Ervin Committee tells, finally, of the wisdom of the people of the nation who, last November, voted their continued trust in the Democratic Party in Congress in the face of a torrent of tainted dollars.
Last November people asked for a government of political checks and balances and a constructive opposition. They are getting it insofar as the Democratic Leadership in Congress is concerned; they are going to continue to get it.

That is what tonight is all about. It is about the election of the 94th Congress a year and a half hence. It is about the need to hold and to strengthen the Democratic Majorities in the Congress.

It is about your support in that effort. Your presence in such numbers here speaks eloquently and we who are trying to hold the line in the Congress are most grateful for your faith. We are grateful, too, for the close cooperation of the National Committee in this endeavor. Under the leadership of Bob Strauss, the pieces of the National Democratic Party have been picked up. Bob Strauss has joined with the House and Senate Leaders and with the Democratic Governors in putting together a new pattern of united democratic strength for the next Presidential election.
For this extraordinarily successful dinner, tonight, we owe much to Wayne Hayes of Ohio, Lloyd Bentsen of Texas, to Tip O'Neil of Massachusetts and to Fritz Hollings of South Carolina. All have given an extra measure of dedication to the party. The efforts of these men can be seen by those of us who work with them in the Congress. They know that they have our deepest appreciation.

But how do we thank those who are not in political life? How do you thank those who take time out of personal affairs to work for Democratic Majorities in Congress? How do we thank Lorne Green, Burl Ives, Freda Payne, Milton Berle and all the others for coming East for this night? How do we thank a Roz Wyman?—A Roz Wyman who has been tireless in her efforts? How, finally, do we thank all of you who come from near and far to join in this opening drive of the 1974 elections?

There is one way. The Democrats in Congress will do, as a party, whatever we can do to purify, to renew and to
strengthen the political processes of the nation. The people's trust in decent government, in constructive government, must be restored. With your help, it will be.

I can tell you I have never been more happy than I am tonight to join with you and the millions throughout the nation in wearing the badge of the Democratic Party and never have I been more sure of the vital role of the Congress in this government than I am tonight.