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Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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REMINDS OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)
BEFORE THE
MORTGAGE BANKERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
STATLER HILTON HOTEL
WASHINGTON, D. C.
TUESDAY, JANUARY 21, 1975, 8:00 P. M.

It is not without some reticence that I choose to address you on the subject of Congressional leadership. As someone has recently pointed out, the trouble with being a political leader these days is that you cannot be sure whether people are following you or chasing you. Whether it is called a "message" or a "signal," some sort of shock has definitely been sent by the people to Washington. At a minimum, it causes a painful ringing in the ears. It can, in more serious cases, portend sudden political death. It is even rumored to be the only known cure for Potomac fever.

However that may be, it is obvious that the public impression of the Federal government, at this time, is not a
happy one. An August 1974 public opinion poll shows the Congress at its highest point in history—48 percent—compared to 21 percent in December 1974. The Presidency has also had its ups and downs, as we all know. What our respective standings are now is open to question.

Leaving aside for the moment the question of whether such feeling is warranted, the fact remains that what is being expressed is, in part, a deep sense of public dissatisfaction and concern with the Federal government. Our people are caught between the jaws of inflation and recession. The effects of this painful pressure were intensified by the Indo-China War, the oil crisis and a growing awareness of an inequitable tax structure. To cap the situation are the shocking blows against the nation's political institutions which have been delivered by the tragedies of Watergate and related matters.

Whatever the sense of frustration, I hasten to add that I do not think that the nation is at the end of the road. To the bumper sticker which commands: "America: Love it or
leave it," the response is simple: whatever the current irritants, who is leaving and who doesn't love it?

You can understand the reasons for that sentiment. Your industry at its best is a symbol of this country. It is energy and growth. It is fresh ideas, competition, progress, service, a faith in the future of the people of the nation. Qualities such as these go with the United States. They have enabled us to withstand the gravest adversity in the past. They provide the binders which hold the nation together, even at a time of government disarray.

Out of these qualities will come the source of tomorrow's renewal of the nation's spirit. It is in this context—in the context of renewal—that I would like to discuss the Congress of the United States, its role and the leadership it is trying to contribute to the nation in this time of trial.

Fourteen years ago, I was elected the Majority Leader of the United States Senate. The mandate has been renewed by my colleagues at regular two year intervals. Many have taken
issue with the nature of that leadership over the years. It is
a political fact of life that some individuals—Republicans,
that is—would have preferred me to be the leader of a minority.

Notwithstanding my party role in the Senate, I can
assure you that there exists a close working relationship with
the leadership of the other party. To be sure, Senator Hugh
Scott of Pennsylvania and I have our differences. Most of all,
however, we share our problems in common. A Senate in continual
partisan conflict is an ineffectual Senate. The Senates of the
past few years have had their faults but measured by any respon-
sible yardstick, they have been effective. They have been active,
innovative, careful, cooperative, and they have been made up of
Americans with a sense of decency, integrity, and fair play.

For the past two years, in particular, the Legislative
Branch has been the principal rock of the Republic and the guardian
of Representative government. On the fundamental Constitutional
questions, party labels have faded almost completely. On the
many other issues, whether the energy, crisis, taxes, appropriations
or whatever, there are differences between the parties and even within the parties in the Congress. There are also differences between the branches and the Congress. It can be no other way. We are a government of separate branches; our politics remain lodged in two major parties. The juxtaposition of views from these various centers of political power are healthy and they are essential under our system of government.

I would note in this connection that the Democratic Majority in the Congress accepted without question, at that time, the vast electoral mandate given a Republican President in 1972. We were not, however, overawed by it then or our increased majority this year. We concluded that the retention of the Democratic Majority in the Congress also carried a message. We read it as a separate mandate from the voters for the assertion of the independent functions of the Legislative Branch. Therefore, we acted to reinforce the Nation's system of checks and balances against what seemend to us to be an excessive accumulation of power in the Executive Branch and,
may I say, that in this process we had a great deal of help from the Republicans in Congress.

The accumulation of Executive power did not begin in the present administration. It has been going on, administration after administration, for decades and much of it had become lodged, as a practical matter, in the permanent bureaucracy. Nevertheless, there were, at the outset of the last Congress, many evidences of a decided shift toward one-branch government which most members of the Congress of both parties found deeply disturbing in a Constitutional sense.

In my judgment, the erosion of the system of checks and balances has been halted. It has not been easy. A President can make decisions as one person and, in a moment, if he chooses to do so. In Congress, a majority of the 100 Senators and of the 435 House Members not only have to agree on a goal but on what course to take to reach it. Then, if a Presidential veto stands in the way of that source, we have to begin again and reshape a new one which will gain the adherence of two-thirds of the Members.
If the country is not in the best of shape today, we might well ponder what the situation might have been if there had not been an independent Congress of dedicated Members—Republicans and Democrats. The fact is that there has been a more constructive Congressional input into National Leadership in the past two years than at any other time in many years. While it may be too early for this change to be felt or even to be widely perceived, it is, nevertheless, a change of great significance.

I would like to state in my remarks today that even as we give our attention increasingly to domestic problems, we cannot turn away from the international underpinning of these problems. The interrelationship of foreign and domestic developments, of course, has long been recognized. I would go further, however, and suggest that our involvement in what goes on outside the United States is greater than is commonly realized. What has happened abroad and how we have responded,
in my judgment, has done much to delineate the situation which now confronts us at home.

I do not propose to try to answer the question of whether this is as it should be. What I should like to do in these brief remarks is to examine some recent examples of ways in which certain foreign policies have affected our life here in the United States.

There is, first of all, to repeat, the tremendous impact of two decades of U.S. activity in Southeast Asia which culminated in one of the most tragic wars in modern history. The circumstances and the attitudes which led us into the deep involvement in that remote part of the world have already receded into the past. What ought to remain fresh in our minds, lest we forget, is the price we have paid and will continue to pay for that involvement.

In much the same fashion, a general line of foreign policy which has consisted of providing military equipment and
supplies to just about any nation willing to take it has also
distorted the domestic situation of the nation. In fiscal year
1974, even after Congressionally imposed retrenchment had been
legislated, we still manage to sell, give, or otherwise make
available equipment and supplies to seventy-eight countries.
Last year, $5.4 billion of military equipment was sold abroad--
most of it through the Department of Defense. An additional
$4 billion worth was given to nations without the capacity to
pay for it.

That this great outflow of devastation has had a
profound effect on some recipient nations is obvious, even a
few artillery pieces can sometimes make a difference in the
precipitation of coups and in the outcome of power struggles in
new or unstable nations. What is not nearly so obvious, however,
is that an export of $10 billion worth of military equipment
is also not without deep effect on this nation's inner affairs.
In the first place, a massive outpouring of military equipment, year in and year out, feeds domestic inflation. It draws down stockpiles of strategic materials. It depletes supplies of finite raw materials. It diverts large amounts of inventive genius and engineering skill to the production of military equipment which lives a short and not very useful life and then goes into obsolescence. It directs a flow of Federal resources from areas of urgent domestic need into a vast and largely useless overseas drain.

As I contemplate that while we are turning out ever more refined military equipment, other nations are doing better at producing electronic equipment, pollution-free automobiles, and are buying U.S. resources for manufacture and re-sale to the United States.

Another aspect of our foreign relations, which, inter-related with our domestic situation is the maintaining of large U.S. military garrisons in bases abroad. This practice has been
going on ever since World War II. Its effect is not unlike the
give-away of billions of dollars of military equipment and
supplies. Even now, we have over 300 major overseas military
bases and more than a thousand minor bases. There are over
3000,000 American servicemen, plus dependents, in Western
Europe. Another 38,000 are stationed in South Korea; U.S.
outposts in Southeast Asia contain still another 28,000.

The financial drain of these deployments is readily
apparent. What is only beginning to become clear, however, is
that we can no longer afford to use federal funds and exchange
resources for extravagances of this kind. There has been a
severe shrinkage in the large margin for error which this
nation possessed a quarter of a century ago. Years of attrition
have weakened the value of the dollar abroad. Years of deficits
are doing the same thing at home.

The U.S. Military presence overseas has been too much
for too long, at too great a cost.
Overseas deployments and military exports constitute only a part of the sum of the current military enterprises of federal government. Total expenditures for the Defense Department have become so astronomical that they are now a key element in the general economic condition of the nation. This year's military budget request of $85.8 billion is the largest in our history, surpassing even the $81.6 billion we spent in 1945, the last year of World War II. At the height of the Indochinese war, the military budget was $20 billion less than the amount requested for this fiscal year. It is reported that the amount for fiscal '76 will be even higher than this year's.

An area of foreign policy which will have a continuing impact on our domestic situation is the nature of our relations with nations controlling significant sources of energy and industrial raw materials. We have come to a shocking realization of the precariousness of our situation in this connection. I do not profess to know whether any U.S. policy towards the
states of the Middle East might have avoided the Arab cut-off of oil exports. I do know that we have done little until recently to pursue a policy which might lead to an acceptable stability in that region.

Without reflecting on the men and women who have struggled with the problems of the region for many years, the fact is that the Middle East has scarcely been a pre-occupation of our principal policy makers except when the blood of war begins to flow.

We must also face the fact that a decent future for the people of the United States cannot be found by shutting a non-existent door. We need the rest of the world even as it needs us. In short, the challenge is to look outward with new perceptions, even as we turn inward to build anew at home.

While there is reason for optimism in regard to a renewal in foreign affairs, it will be of little avail unless there is also a restoration of confidence in government and in the nation's political institutions at home. It is not just a
question of Watergate or forgetting it or pretending that it never happened. It is the whole cloth of government which has become tattered with doubt, distrust, and dissatisfaction. It would, indeed, be convenient were it possible to exorcise in a moment all the inertia, neglects, and abuses that have gone into creating this climate. That cannot be. What can be done is to use the chief instruments of government--the Courts, the Congress and the Executive Branch--to dissolve these abuses before they ever again become fatal to liberty. That is a fundamental responsibility of public leadership--in the Congress, no less than in the Presidency.

Before all else, the people have a right to an electoral system free of doubts and capable of yielding honest, responsible and responsive government open to all and shaped to meet the needs of all. It is incumbent on us to foreclose an excessive intrusion of great wealth, whether corporate, labor, personal or whatever, into the electoral process. That is a
solemn and urgent obligation and, in my judgment, it will not be met except as we are prepared, in the end, to pay for the public business of elections largely with public funds. We are moving in that direction.

It is up to the Congress, too, to do something about other government abuses. Quite apart from Watergate, for example, there have been invasions into the most intimate workings of our lives, into the privacy of all Americans, by ill-coordinated, bureaucratic activity. There have been misinterpretations and maladministrations of laws, sometimes to the extent that they bear little or no resemblance to what Congress intended in the enactment. Representative government have yet to deal effectively with the problem of how to keep bureaucracies responsive to the public need, especially when they grow large, inert, cumbersome, and as in our times, more and more, automated and impersonal.

In my judgment, Congress spends enough time writing laws—in some instances, too much. It may be that it is time, now, for
Congress to devote itself more to looking to the manner of
execution of these laws.

What Watergate, election abuses and, often, a distant
bureaucracy have done to public confidence with regard to the
Federal government, the energy crisis has done in the realm of
the nation's economy.

The immediate responsibility is to make certain that
oil shortages do not devastate the economy again and that the
price of past neglect is borne equitably by all Americans. We
should fit our needs to our resources and we can if we will.

Beyond the immediate, what we must have is a founda-
tion of facts on which to build a national policy on energy.
We have to know far more than we know now if we are to meet
what otherwise promises to be a recurrent threat to the nation's
well-being. It is a threat of widespread business shutdowns, of
transportation paralysis and of a permanent inflation which can
only culminate in recession, unemployment and appalling human
hardship. That, the people of this nation will not tolerate. That, the Congress of the United States no less than the Executive Branch must do all in its power to prevent. The need will not change even if the OPEC nations turn the valves wide-open. I hope that the ball of blame, therefore, will not be passed between the two branches for failure to meet the problem; I hope that we will be able to work together to resolve it. I am sure that with President Ford that will be the case.

The energy crisis has shocked this nation. In so doing, it has also shown us in a sudden flash the precarious manner in which our entire national economic life has come to be organized. It is all well and good to be concerned at this time with the shortage of petroleum. But what of bauxite, nickel, tin, iron and copper and many other materials? What of wood and concrete? Where will the supplies of these and other essentials come from in the years ahead? Indeed, what of food, with the kind of disjointed policies in which exports of wheat in
1972 are stimulated one year only to compel high-priced imports the next?

To say that we have been extravagant with our resources is to put it mildly. In the earliest years of this nation, the first President, George Washington, spoke of raising "a standard to which the wisest and honest can repair." Do we meet such a standard when one day we are obsessed with the threats to our environment and the next, in our concern over the drying up of petroleum supplies, we all but forget that pure air and water are also exhaustible resources? To meet the Washingtonian standard--that is, the President's, not the city's--will take courage, courage to change, courage to innovate, courage to learn, and courage to renew.

It is my hope that the concern of the President and the Congress will not stop with just the energy crisis. The need is to learn from a bad dream before it becomes a nightmare again. The need is to begin, now, to take a careful look at not
only the flashing of isolated warning lights but at the whole integrated switchboard of our national economic existence.

It is not enough, for example, for the Federal government to dole out tens of millions of dollars in a rescue operation to keep bankrupt Penn Central Railroad on the tracks. We need to know where an action of this kind fits into a national rail policy; where that policy, in turn, fits into the overall transportation requirements and the availability of fuels and other essentials in meeting them, not only today, but for the next decade or more. In short, we need to think ahead and to think in an integrated fashion. We need to begin to make the hard choices between what is more important to the nation and what is less, between what is enduring and what is transitory. That is the full scale by which government intervention in the nation's economy, if and when it must take place, should be measured. Unless we begin soon to develop that scale, the right hand of government will tend more and more to undo what the left hand has done.
Let me close by saying that there is a great deal that is right in this nation. We are a generous country with a strong, decent, industrious, and compassionate people. There is ample intelligence and inventiveness and an immense experience and vitality in our midst. If, working together, today, we will put these attributes to use for the benefit of all, there need be no fear for the nation's tomorrow.

This nation will withstand the adversity of the present. This nation will find, again, in the months and years ahead, the essential political leadership in the Presidency and in the Congress. We will renew. We will endure. There is no other choice.