

University of Montana

## ScholarWorks at University of Montana

---

Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews

Mike Mansfield Papers

---

7-31-1975

### Senate Democratic Conference

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield\\_speeches](https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches)

**Let us know how access to this document benefits you.**

---

#### Recommended Citation

Mansfield, Mike 1903-2001, "Senate Democratic Conference" (1975). *Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews*. 1268.

[https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield\\_speeches/1268](https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches/1268)

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Mike Mansfield Papers at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

MAIN FILE COPY  
DO NOT REMOVE

STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

BEFORE THE SENATE DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE

Thursday, July 31, 1975, 12:15 p.m.

Room S-207, The Capitol

We meet for the first time for a luncheon caucus. The first thing to mention is a reminder. We agreed at our last meeting that each of us would limit our comments to five minutes on any measure discussed, including time yielded for questions. The Secretary for the Majority will keep time and signal the five minutes if any of us <sup>is</sup> ~~are~~ carried away for longer by a run-on of our thoughts.

First, I want to say that I was delighted by the way the Senate and the Senate Democrats handled themselves on the Voting Rights measure. It was a difficult procedural situation but, once cloture was obtained, the subsequent resolution of the problem was orderly and proper and free of delay. I wish I could say the same for the New Hampshire affair. It was regrettable, in my judgment, that the Senate was unable to dispose of this matter in a timely fashion. In the end, we had to acknowledge that our own procedures made it impossible to fulfill our Constitutional responsibilities to determine the outcome of the contested election. There was a winner in the November election but we were unable to bring ourselves to identify him. I am afraid that a very bad precedent has been set in this instance which will tend to weaken the Senate's stature and authority. But that is only one Senator's opinion.

With regard to the Culver proposal to establish a Blue Ribbon Commission to make an independent, impartial overall study of the Senate, the Senate adopted this proposal on Tuesday, unanimously. I want to thank Senator Culver and the other members of the advisory committee, Senators Metcalf, Byrd (W. Va.), Ford, Haskell, Huddleston, Hart (Mich.), and Talmadge for their assistance in this matter. The Minority has been completely cooperative. Senator Scott and I anticipate that we will be able to get this study underway very soon, to the end that the Commission's recommendations will be received in the Senate before the close of next year.

I should also like to mention a matter brought to my attention by Senator Gary Hart concerning the possibility of greater leadership participation by junior Senators in the work of many subcommittees. At my suggestion, he is elaborating his thoughts in the form of specific proposals which the Leadership will be glad to take up at a later Conference. Those interested in this idea should talk with him while he is in the process of formulating his proposals.

At our meeting on June 12th, the Democratic Conference directed me to look into the feasibility of establishing a single committee to deal with energy questions. As a first step, I wrote to 21 Senate Committee Chairmen asking them to set forth what they



conceive to be their Committee's present scope of interest and jurisdiction in energy matters. Letters of response have been received from all Committees. The study is in a very preliminary stage and a great deal of time will be required to make a thorough inquiry into the possibilities. I would anticipate appointing an advisory group to assist us in delineating a democratic position as soon as we return from the recess. In any event, I will keep the Conference informed of progress as we go along, and I hope specific proposals can be advanced in time to be considered at the beginning of the next Congress.

Another matter I wish to bring up on my own, today, concerns the inclusion of junior Senators on Senate-House Conference committees. In general, as you know, Senate conferees are chosen by the chairman and the ranking minority member of the Committee which is seized of a measure. It would seem to me most desirable that as far as possible some junior members be included in each Conference. In that fashion, the latter would begin promptly to gain experience in what can be the most difficult stage of the legislative process. I would like some reaction from the Conference on this concept.

A final subject for possible discussion relates to a matter raised by Senator Proxmire at the Policy Committee on Tuesday. As I understand his suggestion, uniform minimum standards for questioning Executive Branch nominees would be established by the Conference or the Senate for nominees before all committees. He used as an ideal model in this respect the Commerce Committee. He felt that under present practices whereby each committee handles interrogation as it sees fit without guidelines, the Senate as a whole is sometimes shortchanged on significant information pertinent to the confirmation of appointees. The discussion in the Policy Committee on Senator Proxmire's proposal was general and inconclusive and the matter is raised here only by way of introduction. Senator Proxmire will set forth his views at our next Conference.