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September 8, 1975

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I wish to join the distinguished Republican leader in expressing my relief and thankfulness that the President of the United States came to no harm on Friday afternoon last in California.

The President has indicated that he is very much impressed with the protection furnished by the Secret Service, and he had nothing but words of praise for the way they performed their duties, obligations, and responsibilities.

The country is grateful that the attempt misfired, if one can use that word in this particular instance. Even though the gun was not cocked and the firing chamber was empty, the next one was not empty.

I hope we will be able to achieve in this Nation a degree of civility and responsibility on the part of all our people so that incidents of this kind will not happen in the future. Presidents have to take chances. President Ford rolled with this one quite nicely, and I was impressed with the statement made by his wife, Betty Ford, to the effect that that is a part of the job which he holds. But it should not be a part of the job which he holds, because there should be nothing but the utmost respect toward the President of the United States; and I hope that this incident will bring about a feeling of renewed responsibility and renewed civility toward whoever happens to hold that office.

September 23, 1975

COMMENTS ON THE LATEST ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I hardly know what to say in view of the fact that, for the third time in 2 weeks, attempts or allegations of attempts have been made upon the life of the President of the United States. There was the incident of Miss Fromme, who did not cock the .45, and even if she had, the first chamber would have been empty, so, fortunately, nothing happened there.

There is the incident or potential incident which occurred in St. Louis about a week ago. Then there was the firing of the bullet last night. Fortunately, it went astray. There was a victim, but it was not the President of the United States and the victim only received a wound in the groin, I understand, and is recovering well at the present time.

Mr. President, I wonder when incidents of this kind are going to stop, and if they continue, how are they going to be stopped? The President has a right to visit with the people, whom he represents as chief of state. But I do not think a President has the right to place his life in danger regardless of his personal feelings, because it is not a matter of Gerald Ford in this instance; but it is a matter of the President of the United States in all instances. As long as he occupies that office, he has a responsibility to the American people to go out and shake hands—press the flesh, so to speak—on occasion, but certainly not to place himself in danger—because, I repeat, it is not the man concerned, it is the office, in effect, which is of paramount importance. I hope it will be possible, through our collective wisdom, to try to devise a system which will afford more protection to a President of the United States. I hope it will bring about, on the part of the American people, the recognition that a very, very tiny minority can wreak great damage on this Republic through the attempts made on the life of the Chief Executive of this Nation.

Again, Mr. President, I do not know what the answer is. I just want to express my shock and my concern and to hope that what has happened will not become endemic or epidemic, and that, as far as protection is concerned, the ultimate will continue to be given.

I have no criticism of the Secret Service. I think they have done a good job. But it is an impossible job in this day and age to protect any one individual if some person in some manner wants to go out of his or her way to attempt to wreck the life of that individual and in that manner thereby hurt the Nation as a whole.