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Asia - A Year After the Fall of Indochina

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001
Remarks of
SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D-MONT.)
Before the
Maine State Democratic Convention
Augusta, Maine
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(After response to introduction, expression of appreciation for award, etc., and recognition of those on platform, i.e., Chairman Harold Pachios, Muskie, Hathaway)

My colleagues in the Senate and fellow Democrats,

I have a number of reasons for being pleased to have this opportunity to return to Maine today. In the first place, it is a good land full of good people. Secondly, I am always happy when I can attend a gathering of my fellow Democrats, in almost any forum, but I am particularly pleased that I could attend your State Democratic Convention in a Presidential election year.

As most of you know, I've been a Democrat all of my adult life. I spent 10 years in the House of Representatives and when I leave office at the end of this year, I will have
completed 24 years in the United States Senate - 16 of those years as Majority Leader. I cite these facts only to give you my credentials as a Democrat and to tell you that I am proud of that designation - and by reason of your presence here today, I know you are too!

When I look back over my two and a half decades of service in the Senate, I can take some measure of pride in the accomplishments of Democratic Congresses during that time. I say some measure of pride because I'm not completely satisfied that we in the Congress during my service as Majority Leader have done all for the people we serve that we might have. But, there is a compelling reason why we were unable to accomplish much that we envisioned - much that we attempted - in the
enactment of national programs which could have been beneficial
to all the people of this great country.

We Democrats have controlled the Congress since

January 1955 - almost 22 years - a long time. But I want to

remind you that during 15 of those 22 years - over two-thirds

of that time the Republicans have been in the White House with

control over the entire Executive Branch of this vast government.

Now, what has that fact meant in relation to the

ability of Democratic Congresses to fashion legislative programs -

an agenda - if you will - for the Nation. Divided government,

with a Congress controlled by Democrats contending with a

Republican President, has spelled delay or doom, through the

veto process, for many of the progressive proposals which
Democrat leaders of the Congress have been able to pass.

Figures are dull, statistics are boring, and I do not intend to belabor a point or befuddle or bore anyone by playing the numbers game. I think, however, that my thesis about the difficulty of making the legislative process work in a divided government can be illustrated rather conclusively by the use of just a few relevant and significant numbers in regard to Republican Presidents and their use of the veto.

President Eisenhower, during his eight years in office, vetoed 181 bills - 181. I think you will agree, that is a formidable figure. Even more significant, however, is the fact that the Congress only twice during that eight years was able to override an Eisenhower veto. Two overrides out
of 181 vetoes -- it tells a story.

President Nixon, in office as President for a little over five and a half years, exercised the veto 43 times -- and we overrode him only five times -- that too tells a story.

And now we have the clincher - the real champion of the use of the veto, President Ford. In slightly over a year and one half in office he has vetoed 48 measures passed by a Democratic Congress and we have been able only in eight instances to override his vetoes.

I apologize for the use of these figures, and I shall not persist, but I maintain that a divided government, primarily, is responsible for the fact that we Congressional Democrats have not accomplished all we hoped. In the last
22 years when we were in control of the national legislature, we labored over two-thirds of that time under the severe handicap of Republican Presidents - Republican Presidents who have used the power of the office - the power of the veto - to frustrate, hamper and kill many of the measures we fought long and hard to pass - measures a significant majority in the Congress believed were in the interest of the American people.

And I'm talking about major bills such as housing, health services, public works employment, education, school lunches and a host of others.

I want to use one more figure by way of illustration and emphasis. During the years when there was a Democrat in the White House, in all the years of President Kennedy and
President Johnson, there were only a combined total of 51 vetoes, and most of those measures were of no major importance or national significance.

So, again, I think that tells a story - and the point of that story is that a divided government - with a Republican President and a Democratic Congress - results, in essence, in a divided Nation. It divides a Nation that yearns not for division, but for unity - the unity of a common people with a common purpose and common goals.

Now, in case anyone doubts what I am suggesting in this Presidential election year before this convention of Maine Democrats, let me spell it out. I'm tired of divided government. I'm tired of seeing our Democratic programs vetoed by Republican
Presidents (one, in this case, who was not even elected by the people). I'm tired of Democrats losing Presidential elections. I hope you are tired of those things too.

And if you are as tired of those things as I am, you and I know what we must do in this election year. If we are truly tired of the way our government has functioned - or failed to function; if we are truly tired of a divided Nation and a divided people - it behooves us to be tireless in our efforts this year to put a Democrat in the White House.

For my part, that will be the number one priority item between now and November 2. I don't know who the nominee will be - I don't think anyone knows at this stage - but whoever that person turns out to be, I'm going to support him!
I'm going to work for him! I'm going to speak for him! And
I'm going to vote for him! And I hope each of you will too.

This year, let us together put an end to disunity - let us together put an end to division among our people - let us together put an end to divided government. Yes, let's together in November put a Democrat in the White House!

That may sound like nothing more than political rhetoric before a political audience in an election year, but I can assure you that insofar as I am concerned, I think it is essential to the welfare of this Nation that we change the occupancy of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue this year.

For the past eight years your Democratic Congresses have had a hard road to travel doing battle day in and day out
with the Nixon-Agnew-Ford Administration. Not only have we had to battle the Administration to enact our progressive Democratic programs and protect them from the threat of veto and actual veto, but we have had to innovate and formulate measures which should have originated in the Administration.

During the past eight years we took the lead in forcing the Nixon Administration to disentangle this Nation from a futile, mistaken and tragic war in Southeast Asia. And almost before we got our valiant men back home where they belong this Democratic Congress, in order to keep them home, had to say no to another foreign misadventure which the Ford Administration proposed for America in far away Angola.

I am reminded, too, that it was a Democratic Congress
which presided over America's future when the White House was paralyzed by the Nixon-Agnew Watergate scandals, by impeachment proceedings and wholesale criminal trials, and by the first resignation in the history of the American Presidency.

Yes, it was a Democratic Congress which realized, when the 94th Congress convened in January of 1975, that for the first time in our history the Executive Branch of our government was not only in the hands of the opposition party but in the hands of those who had never been elected by the voters of America to the two highest offices in our land.

We realized that, and we realized we faced a formidable task, as the only members of the national government elected by the people, in formulating and passing a legislative program
to meet the energy and economic needs of the Nation.

Years of neglect by an Administration preoccupied with the criminal activities of Watergate and its aftermath, preoccupied with tampering with our institutions of government, preoccupied with foreign adventures, preoccupied with subverting the proper role of our FBI and intelligence agencies had left us with our economy staggering and with an energy crisis approaching disaster proportions.

In February of last year your Congressional leaders, aware of our plight, said, and I quote, "It has only been in times of war and during periods of great economic depression that American citizens have confronted national problems as urgent and critical as those presented by today's rapidly
deteriorating economy and the potential threat to the Nation's supply of energy."

Recognizing the crucial nature of these issues and realizing the inherent interrelationship between energy and the economy, the Democrats in Congress immediately began to formulate comprehensive proposals designed both to insure rapid and continuing economic recovery and growth while providing for national energy sufficiency.

We set as our first priority a return to full employment through fiscal and monetary actions designed to promote economic recovery with a substantially reduced inflation level.

On the energy side, we set the target at implementing a comprehensive conservation program; the expansion of domestic
energy supplies by diversifying energy sources; and the establishment of management procedures in the event of drastic energy shortages.

Time will not permit, nor is this the place for itemizing the many proposals enacted by the first session of the 94th Congress in carrying out the broad goals we set for ourselves over a year ago in attempting to meet the economic and energy needs of the American people. In short, Congress has delivered on its pledge to aid the sagging economy and we held firm regarding a responsible lid on the price of energy.

There were setbacks which inhibited our efforts seeking economic recovery. There was the veto, for example, of the housing legislation designed to stimulate construction
and create jobs in the badly depressed housing industry.

There was the veto also of the emergency jobs bill, a veto exercised in spite of the fact that unemployment was hovering over the 8% mark.

There was frustration in the Congress over the repeated vetoes of well thought out and vitally needed legislation and the vetoes did not make any easier our task of implementing the overall policy we designed.

But, in spite of our setbacks, I think you can take pride in your Democratic Congress and of its record during the first session of the 94th Congress in establishing a sound and well considered economic and energy policy for the Nation.

The record will show it was the most productive first session
of any Congress in recent times - and I have been around for a few of them - so I speak with some knowledge about our accomplishments last session.

But I don't want to mislead you today by indicating that the last session of Congress solved all our energy and economic problems. I am not here today to tell you we have done more than take the first tentative steps on the long road toward full employment, toward a growing, healthy and expanding economy, and toward the distant goal of national energy sufficiency.

I know I don't need to tell the people of this state that the unemployment rate remains intolerable - that unemployment in Maine is well above the national average and
that last year the cost of heating every home in this state practically doubled.

What I do want to leave with you is the belief that your Democratic Congress knows your problems - your Democratic Congress has begun the process which will revitalize the economy of this Nation and we have taken the first steps which will assure that this Nation will achieve energy supplies sufficient to its needs by 1985 if our programs are enacted and implemented.

If you want us to complete that journey - if you want the unemployed of this Nation to return to work - if you want to return to a healthy economy in which all our people share in the benefits - if you want us to guarantee this Nation
will never again face the threat of disastrous energy shortages and soaring and prohibitive energy prices - then send back to Washington a Democratic Congress and send us a Democratic President who will work with us to help achieve those ends. Send us a Democratic President who will not divide us but who will unite us in seeking our common goals. America is in need of harmony - cohesiveness - togetherness. I believe a Democratic Congress and a Democratic President can help restore our belief in ourselves - can bring us together - and that is my hope.

I said when I began my statement that there were a number of reasons why it was a pleasure for me to return to Maine today. I have already told you some of those reasons,
but there are two I have not yet spoken of. Those two are

sitting on the platform today - and they are two of the main

reasons I'm happy to be in Maine today. They are my friends

and my colleagues in the Senate - Bill Hathaway and Ed Muskie.

I speak first of Bill Hathaway. I have not known

him as long as I have known Ed Muskie, but that fact does not
diminish the regard I have for him, nor does it diminish my
respect for his contributions during his three years as a
Member of the Senate. Bill did not come to the Senate as a

novice. His apprenticeship in the House of Representatives for
eight years served him in good stead - and I know that his

service as your State Democratic Party Chairman in the early

sixties gave him the experience and background which have been
beneficial to him in our national party councils.

The Senator, as most of you know, has long had an interest in many of the things that are dear to my heart. He has had a long and active interest in continuing adult education and has been the author of a number of worthwhile amendments in the field of higher education and vocational education.

He has been instrumental in tax reform and I have a feeling he will have an impact on the current tax reform bill being considered by the Senate Finance Committee, particularly in the area of tax shelters. Bill is also the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Revenue Sharing and will have a great deal to offer in considering the extension of the Revenue Sharing Act due to
expire at the end of this year - an act, I might say, which is
of absolutely vital concern to states, counties, cities and
towns all across this Nation. I know you are all familiar too
with Bill’s work as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Alcoholism
and Narcotics - a subject this Nation, the Congress and industry
has tended to sweep under the rug. I recall too that I was the
first Senator in December of 1973 to cosponsor Bill Hathaway’s
amendment to end discrimination in our military academies. As
you know, that amendment became law in June last year and women
are now attending the academies. I won’t mention all of his
accomplishments, but I should tell you that just a little over
a week ago Bill was successful in securing passage in the Senate -
against long odds - of a bill giving legislative jurisdiction
to the Select Committee on Small Business - a measure that will be most meaningful to the small businessmen of Maine and the Nation. Bill Hathaway is a good Senator - he is serving you well.

And now if I may - and in conclusion - I want to say just a few words about my friend Ed Muskie and what I believe he has contributed to this state and to this Nation.

Since he was elected your Governor in 1954 and came to the attention of the national press, Ed has been a moving force for good in national politics. You know of his record as your Governor far better than I and I need not go into that, but I can tell you that I know in detail his record in the Senate of the United States and since you elected him to that body in 1958,
there is no Member of the Senate who has written a better record of individual accomplishment for the people of this state and Nation.

It was Ed Muskie, for instance, who from a very junior position on the Senate Public Works Committee became interested in water pollution legislation long before most of the public and most of the Members of Congress became aware of the fact that pollution of our environment had become a major national threat to our welfare.

And it was Ed Muskie, while recognizing the need to clean up our environment, also realized that we had to balance that need with our local and national economic requirements. He has been instrumental, exercising his calm and
judicious temperament in bringing about a reconciliation of those interests. In order for me to catalog all of Senator Muskie's legislative accomplishments would require that you allot to me all the time remaining for your convention - and I know you have other important business to transact. I would only remind you that Ed Muskie has been an integral part of the Senate of the United States almost from the day of his arrival. He has been a mover and a leader and his wise counsel has been an inspiration and a comfort to the Leadership of the Senate. Ed presently is Chairman of the Subcommittee on Environmental Pollution of the Public Works Committee, which enables him to be a powerful force respecting environmental concerns. He chairs the Special Committee on Aging and has
been particularly effective in regard to problems of the elderly including health, consumer interests, housing and long-term care. He chairs the Legislative Review Committee of the Democratic Policy Committee which I head and, as Assistant Majority Whip of the Senate, has been a strong right arm of the Leadership.

With all of his accomplishments, however, I think probably the most significant event during my years in the Congress was Ed Muskie's vision and foresight in formulating and bringing to fruition the enactment of the Congressional Budget Reform Act.

During the period in 1973 when the revelations of Watergate were dominating our newspapers, radio and television,
it was Ed Muskie, working with our beloved colleague Sam Ervin, who hammered out through a most difficult and trying process the legislation which led to the creation of the Congressional Budget Office and the House and Senate Budget Committees.

This new budget process has provided Congress, for the first time in its history, not only the vehicle for eliminating waste and reordering national priorities, but also represents a revolutionary change in the way Congress does business with the Executive Branch and the national Budget.

In my view, it is the most important single step we have taken in my years in the Congress to restore control of our vast national Budget, through their elected representatives, to the people of this Nation.
As you know, Senator Muskie gave up his most important seat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to become Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee. I regret he had to do so, because I served with him on the Foreign Relations Committee and his contribution to the dialogue on the foreign affairs of this country during some of our most trying times was immeasurable. But the Budget Reform Act is the most sweeping reform in U. S. government, certainly since World War II. It has changed the way Congress spends the public money - does the public business. It forces Congress to discipline its spending - to decide its priorities - to face the fact that tax dollars and America's resources are not limitless and must be spent wisely. It challenged some long-standing bad habits of
Congress and threatened some powerful interests accustomed to having their own way with the Federal purse. Be that as it may, through Ed Muskie's comprehension, skill and tenacity, the Budget Reform Act became law. And when we needed a Chairman for the Budget Committee, though there were others more senior, the Senate chose Senator Muskie - a wise choice. When he accepted that chairmanship - I expect with some degree of trepidation - there were the pessimists who wished him well but harbored the belief that he could never make the process work. Perhaps they underestimated Ed Muskie's ability or perhaps they underestimated the force of the public demand for true governmental and budgetary reform - and perhaps there was a little of both.
But Ed Muskie has made the process work and in doing so has carried it beyond partisanship. In less than two years he has built the budget discipline into Senate thinking - and he has had to say no to almost all of us at one time or another - he has had to say no to some of our - and his - favorite programs which simply cost too much. But he has done the hard things which his duty required of him, and the Senate has followed his lead. Not all have liked it - but they have accepted it - and this is the measure of Ed Muskie's ability to lead! And what it means to you - and what it means to the Congress - your Congress - is that we can now claim our rightful constitutional control over the purse strings of the United States government.
Last month when the Senate passed the First Concurrent Budget Resolution by an almost three-to-one majority (62-22), I made a few brief remarks. While I try to make it a habit not to be presumptuous enough to quote Mike Mansfield's words, I hope you will forgive me for doing so on this occasion.

I said then regarding the passage of the resolution, "I believe it is a great tribute in particular to the distinguished Senator from Maine (Mr. Muskie) who provided the type of leadership that permitted this dramatic shift of responsibility from the executive to the legislative and within the legislative from existing jurisdictions to the Budget Committee.

Many have forecast that the Congress would not permit this type of self-discipline - today the Senate has demonstrated that it
will insist upon this responsibility...That the Senate has accomplished this first step in the congressional budget process in a most timely manner is again a tribute to the leadership, the intelligence, the experience, the talent and tenacity of the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, our respected colleague, Ed Muskie. As majority leader of this body, I cannot commend Ed Muskie too highly for his long months of hard work and dedication culminating in the passage of this resolution."

I meant those words - I mean them today. In the years ahead, I believe the Budget Committee will become the single most important committee of the U. S. Senate - and believing so - I am glad that Ed Muskie is its Chairman.
As you know, when I complete my term this year, I will leave the Senate where I have spent the most trying, yet the most rewarding, years of my public life.

I would be less than candid unless I tell you that I leave the institution I have served and revered with some degree of sadness and regret. But I will leave that body with the belief that it is in good hands. I leave the Senate with the knowledge that Bill Hathaway and Ed Muskie will be there to help guide and protect the Senate through the trying years ahead. Your two Senators are big men in stature and in heart - they have been a solace to me over the years in my role as Majority Leader - and they stand tall in the ranks of the Senate. I hope you are as proud of them as I am.