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ARTICLE BY SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

FOR THE TORONTO STAR

MAY 21, 1976

The American bicentennial coincides with my last year in the Senate of the United States. As a result, the year has for me, not only a special significance as a national commemoration but also a very personal meaning. In asking where America has come from, where we are and where we may be headed as a nation, I cannot evade the question of whether or not three decades of national service in the Congress have been well spent.

These questions are best answered if the nation and the Congress are both seen as continuities. The living generations of Americans and those who hold political office on their sufferance are both sojourners for a brief span. We are not the sole source of all that is right in the land. Nor are we the perpetrators of all that may be wrong. We are born into a cumulative situation. We modify it to some extent for better or worse during our lifetimes and pass it on. We are, in short, participants in a continuing process.

In its most significant aspect, the continuity has to do with the elaboration of human freedom in civilized society. The process did not begin in America. Freedom as we know it and Canadians know it reaches back to the Magna Carta and its roots go even deeper into the past.

The American Revolution whose Bicentennial is now being celebrated is, of course, one of the great milestones. Having crossed the Atlantic to the new world, the concept of the freedom of man was lifted to new levels of

realization by the exceptional political leadership which emerged at the time of the Revolution. Jefferson, Washington, Franklin and the others were great American patriots but there was also a touch of the universal in many of them. They were steeped in the heritage of freedom and its political expression in England and Western Europe. A new land provided these leaders with an opportunity to give it a renewed impetus. Courage and steadfastness on the part of the American settlers did the rest and the revolutionary struggle was won.

America's basic meaning today, as in the past and as it undoubtedly will be in the future is to be found in the Declaration of Independence. The finest hours of the nation's history are foreshadowed in the stirring words of this great statement of liberty. "We hold these truths to be self-evident...", and it goes on to set forth in unequivocal language the principles of human freedom and equality.

It seems to me that throughout our history, Americans have acted best when we have acted to elaborate and to advance these revolutionary premises. That was the effect, for example, of the addition of the Bill of Rights to the Constitution immediately after its completion; these first ten amendments were designed to safeguard the individual's freedom and dignity against arrogant authority and they have served nobly to that end. Subsequent amendments extend the concept of political equality and grope towards social equity. The 26th and last secures political equality for eighteen year olders. It is one of the measures which I sponsored in the Senate and its inclusion in the Constitution is a source of deep personal gratification.

Similarly, the concepts of freedom and equality have been advanced by a great deal of the legislation which has been enacted by Congress during

the past 200 years. A Homesteader's Act after the Civil War, for example, served to enlarge opportunities for a better life for millions in the Middle West. In our own day, rural electrification, public power and countless other monuments of the Roosevelt days have had a similar effect in the West. Today, a great deal of legislation is concerned with improving the economic lot of urban dwellers and the poor. In short, a great body of law and public policies has emerged which is in accord with the spirit of the Declaration of Independence. And when our forces joined Canadians and others in World War II in resistance to a cruel and militaristic domination of the globe, the effort was in direct descent from the Revolution of 1776.

To be sure, there are lapses, lost roads, dead ends and backtracking in our history as in that of any other nation. One might note, for example, that it was a hundred years between Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the great civil rights legislation of the 1960's. We went through our McCarthy era and the tragic misadventure of Viet Nam. In many matters, notably in foreign relations, we are still groping uncertainly for the course which will lead to a secure America in a livable world. At home, we are still striving to find the balances which will give to freedom a full measure of meaning for all Americans in an orderly society.

Notwithstanding shortcomings, it seems to me that a retrospect of two centuries shows an inspiring past, a livable present and a hope for the future. On balance our efforts have been leading us, generally, in the direction delineated by the founding fathers.

The American people have evolved from a beachhead population of less than three million scattered in thirteen disparate colonies to well over 200 million in fifty States held together in indissoluble federal union. From

what must have seemed an infinite wilderness to the early settlers, the nation has spread thousands of miles over land and ocean to the confines of our present boundaries. To indigenous Indian tribes was added a new stock drawn at first largely from England which in itself was already a thorough admixture of peoples. Later, cultural and racial strains from all over the world, flowed into our ranks. While there are conscious minorities in our midst, the American population is as close as any in the world to universalism. We have reached this point, moreover, with our essential unity intact.

In the process of two hundred years of growth we have been freed from certain of the hazards and uncertainties of life which were peculiar to the early frontier. The fear of hunger has vanished. Shelter is available to almost all. Illness and pre-mature death are a far lesser threat. Standards of living are high for great numbers of Americans. Our power and affluence are often described as unparalleled. At the same time, we have advanced a great distance towards legal equality for all and we have made a great deal of progress in opening up equitable opportunities for all. In many ways, life is better in the America of 1976 than 1776. In many ways, the promise of the Declaration of Independence has been met. There is, for a great many, a tangible meaning in the phrase, "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

At the same time, however, we are being confronted with new sources of anxieties both at home and abroad. Many are concerned by the possibility of the loss of much that has been gained. The security of national isolation which once existed is gone forever. There are no bonafide assurances of civilized survival for us or for any nation in a world stalked by the ever-present threat of nuclear immolation.

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Within America, too, there are uncertainties. The independence of the individual, so characteristic of the early days of the Republic, has been constricted by the interdependence which is the hall-mark of the modern era. More and more society is dependent on computerized organization for sheer survival. Even though we live closer together, our communities have been depersonalized in their very crowding and drained of the security which they once provided. Great urban complexes are beginning to tremble under the weight of problems associated with crime, pollution and countless other difficulties.

Notwithstanding, it seems to me that America has found, to date, sufficient resiliency in its institutions, federal, state and local, and both governmental and private, to grapple with these problems. It has not been easy and, sometimes, there is an impression of running on a treadmill. Nevertheless, in my judgment, this nation will be able to stay on top of its difficulties, provided we can preserve, through decent and responsible politics, a close rapport between government and the people. At the same time, it must be noted that specific problems, notably the nuclear threat, are beyond unilateral solution. No nation is any longer an island unto itself. In that sense, America's future is interwoven with the future of all the nations of the world.