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Foreign Aid

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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Foreign Aid

no date

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Congress has had the foreign aid legislation under consideration

since early spring. Before that, since adjournment last year, the entire mutual security program has been under the microscopes of several Legislative and Executive investigations. Foreign aid may not be the best activity the Congress has authorized in the last decade, but it certainly ought to be about the best-known activity.

The time has come to close out this matter in legislation for the current year. We have already decided on the basis of the President's requests and our own deliberation that the mutual security program must continue for the present. We have agreed that it should go on.

We have got one more question and only one to answer: How much money this year? That is not a question which lends itself to an exact, a precise answer. In the first place, nobody knows what is going to happen to the international situation in the next year. It might get better--we can hope that it will--but it might get worse. One thing is reasonably certain, it will not remain the same. Any changes

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in that situation should have a great relevance to the level of appropriations for foreign aid.

In the second place nobody seems to know how much is already in the pipeline of foreign aid from previous appropriations; how large the balance of unexpended funds in the bank--both committed and uncommitted--is at this time. I have heard any number of estimates but it is safe to say that the figure is in excess of \$5 billion. In addition, this country holds currencies of other countries in the amount of two and a half billion dollars, as a result of sales of agricultural surpluses. Many of these so-called counterpart accounts can be drawn against by the Administration, without further Congressional action, for the same purposes that the mutual security legislation seeks to accomplish.

We are back, then, to the single question: How much money this year for the mutual security program? How much do we add to the already existing balance to keep this necessary program going? The President originally asked in his budget for \$3.8 billion. The Senate

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was willing to authorize \$3.6 billion and the House only \$3.1 billion.

As a result of the Conference consideration, Congress has now authorized \$3.3 billion.

That is the amount, the maximum amount which Congress has agreed can be added to the balance of funds already appropriated or otherwise available during fiscal year 1958.

Although he originally asked close to \$3.8 billion, the President says that he can make do with this \$3.3 billion, but no less. On the other hand, the House says that only \$2.5 billion is necessary at this time to continue the program. That is the amount the House has voted to appropriate.

The Senate now has this House appropriation bill under consideration. It can accept it as is--that is, \$2.5 billion. It can raise it to the amount the President says that he needs, that is \$3.3 billion or it can set a new figure which ought to be acceptable both to the House and the President.

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No useful purpose is served by claiming that one figure rather than another is the precise amount necessary. In the very nature of the situation, there can only be imprecision. Much harm can be done, if we become involved in a prolonged wrangling trying to prove that the House is right or the President is right. If circumstances change slightly, either one may be right. If they change substantially in the next few months both may be completely wrong.

I believe it is wiser to set a figure for this program, a substantial figure which will certainly enable the mutual security program to go on but at the same time will reflect the need for economy, a need that everyone recognizes as essential if we are to do all the things that should be done and still remain solvent.

I believe that a figure of about \$3 billion should be agreed upon at this time. I hope the Senate will vote to appropriate that amount. I hope the House will agree to it and I hope the President will find it acceptable.

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That amount will reflect a reasonable and respectful confidence in the President's judgment of the needs of the international situation. It will also reflect the views of the House and Members of this body that far more can be done than is being done to improve the administration of aid programs.

Three billion dollars should be ample to permit necessary defense cooperation with friendly nations to continue.

Three billion dollars should be more than enough to provide essential assistance in emergency situations and to nations which are under heavy communist pressure, provided they are vigorous in measures of self-help.

Three billion dollars will permit us to get aid to underdeveloped nations away from a charity, year-to-year basis on to a mutually beneficially and respectable loan basis.

Three billion dollars will allow for an intelligent pursuit of the Point Four, technical cooperation, which virtually all observers agree is one of the most useful and beneficial of all of the devices employed in this program.

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Three billion will be enough, in short, if the Administration undertakes the necessary reforms in this program. It will be enough, if the Administration makes progress in integrating the I.C.A. within the Department of State, and thereby eliminates costly duplication and confusion of functions. It will be enough if the administration practices the economy that it preaches and uses words like "vitally necessary" and "essential" with the discrimination and caution that they should be used.

If the international situation should improve markedly, than \$3 billion will be more than enough for the purposes of this program. In that event, I hope that the Administration will feel under no compulsion to spend the entire amount. I hope that it will see fit to return a substantial sum to the ~~Russ~~ Treasury.

On the otherhand, if there should be a serious deterioration in the situation, of course the President can ask for a supplemental appropriation, and if the need arises--a real need--while Congress is out of session, there is not a Member of either House who would

shirk his obligation to come back to Washington to appropriate whatever
is essential for the security of the nation. The Congress of the
United States does not need to be threatened with special sessions.
It welcomes them if a genuine need in terms of the national welfare
is involved.

Let us, then, move to close out this legislation for the
current session. Let us move promptly to arrive at an acceptable
figure. Let us get this bill through at about \$3 billion.