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Butte - Democracy and the War

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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My fellow Americans:

It is a privilege to have the opportunity to talk to the people of western Montana and especially so from Butte my old home town. It was here that I met the girl later to become my wife; it was here -- in the mines -- that I received my real education; and it was to Butte that I came to earn my livelihood after thirteen months overseas during the World War.

We people of western Montana come from all parts of the world but we are united by a real love of our country. This love is based on the many benefits which we -- and those who have preceded us -- have received in this land of ours. My father and my mother were both immigrants and I am intensely proud of that fact and grateful to them that they chose America as the land to migrate to. They came seeking freedom, justice, and equality and they found here in the United States that which they ~~were~~ sought. These factors and others combined to bring into being the type of government under which we live, namely, a democracy.

But democracy -- as we know it, love it, and understand it -- is today facing a challenge as to its very existence. This challenge must be met, met by all who believe in its fundamental principles and who love the liberties and responsibilities that go with it. It is dangerous in this world of today to take democracy for granted and it is up to us -- all of us -- to take cognizance of the dangers affecting our system and to clarify our thinking as to our responsibilities. Only as long as we have democracy in our daily lives will we continue to have democracy in our government.

At the present time the world is engaged in another great war and the peoples of all countries are apprehensive. Even we, in America, are affected by this struggle despite the fact that we are not active participants. We Americans stand for peace because we know full well

what the horrors of war really are. I feel keenly about this subject because I was a veteran of the last war, having enlisted when I was only fourteen years of age.

We are wincerey anxious for peace and our only desire is to promote the best interests of our country. Across the ocean decisions of life and death are being made by small groups of men but here we have a real free forum -- the only one in existence -- representing the people. May God grant to our President and to our Congress the privilege of guiding our nation safely thru any storms which may be encountered in our national life.

The present war is a struggle to preserve the balance of power in Europe. Under the circumstances and regardless of our sympathies for the belligerents, truth impels us to state that a victory for one or the other will no more solve Europe's problems than it did in 1918. Let the Europeans settle their own problems and let us settle those (and they are many) which confront us in our own land.

We are primarily interested in the preservation of a democratic form of government in the United States. If we join in another world war, it might be difficult to maintain such a government in this country. We would be bound to go far toward totalitarianism because modern war is the enemy of democracy. Our best service to the cause of democracy is to keep it alive in the United States and provide a standard to which the world may return, in time.

Other countries wage war, we must wage peace, but peace with preparedness. If we want to keep out of war we must keep clear of the roads that lead to war. These paths lead to the pursuit of a dangerous temporary prosperity out of the profits of war trade. We should follow paths of prosperity which are based on production for peace and not for war. We can wage peace best if we build up a strong resistance to

foreign or domestic propaganda and to our own emotionalism.

Older people declare wars but younger people fight them. Why not reverse the process at least to the extent of making those who seem so anxious for war and who have the power because of their official positions to bring about such a declaration -- why not make it mandatory that they be the first to go? It is almost a truism in this country of ours that we would never go to war if those in responsible positions had to do the fighting instead of sitting in comfortable offices, uttering platitudes, and cheering the population on.

In these days of difficulty we must think of our duty to ourselves and to those who suffered and died for their country. We must stop this talk that we will be drawn into a European war, that we cannot avoid it, and that our participation is inevitable. If we say it often enough -- if this fatalistic talk goes on -- we will become involved because the position of any nation is largely what that nation thinks its position is.

We desire nothing that is selfish or cowardly. We are willing to risk our all in a real cause but let it be an American cause. This is no time for any kind of action except united nation and America must stand as a unit if American ideals are to be preserved. The freedom that we enjoy today is the result of the labors of many patriots in the past. The American nation is the triumph of the men and women who fought for the principles upon which it is founded. The America of the future will similarly bear the marks of the political and economic workmanship of the present generation. Let us hope -- and pray -- that those who follow us can look back upon our actions with pride and continue in the enjoyment of the democratic practices and privileges which are ours.

The possibility of war is not the only danger facing us today. Another danger confronting is a trend which would break down the equality of American citizens. Differences in religion, political belief, or the

amount of money or goods one possesses^s should make no difference in the practice of equality in government. Groups working for this break down sometimes act subtly, but sometimes they are bold in their assertions that one class of people are better and more fitted to rule than another class. For instance Mr. J. Gilbert Hill writing in Nations Business in October, 1939 had the temerity to advocate that anyone receiving relief should not be allowed to vote. Does he forget that a year or two of sickness, the loss of a job, or ~~o~~ some other ~~s~~ similar blow from fate would place thousands more of us on relief? Does he forget that in time of war these people whom he says should not have the right to vote would be among the first to be called to defend their, and his, country: A statement that the poor do not pay taxes and therefore should not participate in the making of laws is false. Anyone who eats or buys clothes or fuel or pays rent, pays taxes!

We face other dangers also, not the least among which is possible entanglement in the present European war. We should remember that a people at war is not a free ~~s~~ people. We should remember that on the outbreak of war in our country we would immediately become subject to censorship, surveillance, and restrictions of various kinds. We would perhaps become impoverished, we would lose our high position as the peaceful preserver of democracy and the bulwark of the principles of equality, freedom, and justice. These principles must be maintained by a united American opinion so that a weary world at the close of the war can return to find help in our sanity, our prosperity, and our peace.

If we are to keep out and keep calm in the face of the European war, it is not equally true that we should remain calm in the face of ~~s~~ dangers which would destroy our civilization at home. Since 1929 we have been faced with the years of insecurity. These hunger years have threatened the American way of life -- the enemies of which are, at present, unemployment, disease, and insecurity in ^{old} ~~old~~ age and in childhood. These

public enemies must be met and conquered because the American way of life with its great tradition in the past and with its hopes for the future must go on.

We must wage war against unemployment. We must stimulate public and private spending so that sterile dollars will go into circulation and keep the wheels of prosperity turning. We must battle disease of all kinds and among all our people so that we Americans will be able to maintain our strength, our courage and our hope. We must reach down into all the nooks and crannies of our population and give to each individual -- at public expense if need be -- the care to which he is entitled but which so few of them can afford. We cannot continue to avoid this problem because if we do all of us will suffer in the long run.

Let us remember that poverty, misery, humiliation, and unemployment are the factors which cause social upheavals; that dictatorships have never been welcomed on a prosperous and contented people; and that anything can happen here if we refuse to ~~take~~ take cognizance of the difficulties confronting us.

We want to go on living like normal Americans of past generations-- to work, to marry, and to raise our children in comfort and in peace. We want to give our children the opportunity to grow up as children before them have, to be well fed, to be educated, and to have a philosophy of hope. We must do away with the insecurity of our aged and give them the livelihood and absence from worry toward the close of their lives to which they are justly entitled.

Our elders must be taken care of and it is the duty of the people of this country to see to it that an adequate pension system is put into operation. These older citizens must, as a matter of right, be given the opportunity to spend their declining years in comfort and security. They have helped to develop this country and its resources and they have helped

to maintain democracy. They are America and we must never forget it.

Another thing which we must face is the farm problem. Too many farmers today are tenant farmers and not the possors of the acres which they till. Too many good and decent farmers are in the cities trying to find enough for their families to live on. This situation calls for help and, if necessary, legislation should be passed to remedy it. We must not lose sight of the fact that the farmer is the backbone of America and that ~~everytime~~ everytime the farmer's position is weakened and his landholdings made insecure we are loosening the foundations of our economic set-up.

The farm problem is not the farmers alone. The farmer asks for nothing unusual but he does want an equal opportunity under our present economic system. The farm problem is bound up with capital and labor and the sooner everyone realizes this the sooner the farm problem will be settled and the sooner national prosperity will be returned. This calls for cooperation -- a better understanding and a keener realization of the ills affecting others outside our immediate spheres.

These problems must be faced and I have no fear that they will not be conquered because our heritage is too precious to lose thru an unwillingness to face facts. These problems constitute the battle fronts in our domestic war -- the only war in which we are engaged. Let us marshal our forces, plan our strategy, and campaign vigorously and emphatically against these public enemies of ours. We do not seek a temporary advantage but a lasting victory so that the future of democracy -- our future -- will remain secure.

On what does the future of democracy depend? It depends on peace, so that progress and prosperity in our country may go forward uninterruptedly and so that our income may be spent for the benefit of civilization

and not for ~~the~~ its ~~destruction~~ destruction; so that every man, woman, and ~~a~~ child in America will have sufficient food, proper shelter, decent clothing, a good education, and a fair amount of security.

The future of democracy depends on the proper carrying-out of our democratic ideals. A vigilant public opinion is needed in order that men and women elected or appointed to public office should know the sanctity of their trust and answer to the citizens accordingly. Intelligent, courageous, and unselfish leaders are necessary to preserve democracy and an intelligent and alert citizenry must be needed to insure the future of democracy in our country.

I beleive in democracy and in the future of this country. I beleive the American people -- farmers, workers, housewives, and businessmen-- are capable of administering their own affairs. Insofar as the office I seek is concerned I want to say to the voters of western Montana that you should send to the Congress of the United States one who will gâve his ~~the~~ entire time and ability to doing your work and only your work while in Washington. This I promise to do.

Thank you, friends