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Speeches, The Deepening Disquiet

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I make these remarks, today, to express what I believe to be a deepening disquiet in the nation. It is as though we were passing through a stretch of stormy seas in a ship which is obviously powerful and luxurious but a ship, nevertheless, frozen in a dangerous course and with a hull in pressing need of repair.

Let me say at the outset that I do not speak solely of questions of national defense or of space-exploration. To be sure there are grounds for concern in these matters.

We will distort the problem, however, if we view it solely from that perspective. The disquiet, the deepening national disquiet, is many-sided in its origins. We shall measure it in full dimension only as we see the multiple sources from which it derives. We shall deal with it only as we have the courage and the will to act as heart and mind tell us we must act in the light of what we see.
If the disquiet in the nation is due in part to apparent deficiencies of national defense, it comes even more from a growing awareness that international peace is held together by a thread stretched taut. That is the case even though, as never before, the hopes for peace are universal. That is the case even though, as never before, the fearful price of another war is accurately estimated everywhere in the world. That is the case, even though, as never before, the world is flooded with cries for peace and, indeed, with deeply sincere efforts for peace.

Why, Mr. President? Why, despite these universal hopes, these universal estimates, these universal cries, these universal efforts are we no closer to peace? For years we have answered this question or thought that we have answered it in a fashion that was at once simple and reassuring. We had only to charge the Russians or the Chinese with keeping the goal of peace beyond the outstretched fingers of mankind. The evidence was enough and more to brand these nations for their disservices to peace and so we branded them. We did it again and again. But has it been enough, Mr. President? Has it been enough for this nation? Has it been enough--this simple formula--for the human race?
Do shortcomings elsewhere, though they be many, relieve us of the necessity of facing our own? Do shortcomings elsewhere explain why there is so little to show for the enormous sacrifice for peace and national defense which the people of the United States have made in these postwar years?

I know, Mr. President, that it is regarded in some quarters as fashionable to belittle that sacrifice. It has been caricatured many times. Let us not in the Senate, however, make the mistake of confusing the caricature with the character of the effort. In a decade and a half, the people of the United States, through the Congress, have appropriated $500 billions for the Defense Department and countless additional billions for related purposes. They have made available foreign aid over the same period which is now approaching a total of $100 billion.

These are not small sacrifices. They are unprecedented sacrifices for peace and defense, unequaled anywhere in the world. Add to them the priceless human sacrifices in Korea. Add to them, finally, the searing revolution of the soul which the American people have undergone and the change which they have accepted in consequence. That change, Mr. President, is implicit in the move from a high degree of national isolation 25 years ago.
into the role of foremost exponent of the United Nations system and
of alliances and other international undertakings which stretch from
one end of the globe to the other.

No, Mr. President, let us not speak lightly of the burden
which the people of the United States have borne on behalf of the
common defense of the nation and on behalf of peace. The question
is not why have the people of this nation been willing to do so little
for defense and peace. Rather, the question is why has not more
been done for defense and peace with what the people have been
willing to do?

Indeed, it is that question which is asked more and more
by the citizens of this nation. In that question lies one of the great
sources of the deepening disquiet in the land.

Glittering National Statistics vs. Human Realities

And there are other questions, many others, from whence this
disquiet springs. There are those questions involving the inner state
of the nation and its economic well-being. It is difficult to raise these
questions without being reminded that ours is the most powerful and
affluent nation anywhere in the world.

Let me say that I need no such reminders. The power and
affluence are there and it is fortunate for us that they are there.
The statistics make it clear, very clear, that we still are as we have been, for decades, the most producing, the most consuming nation the world has ever know. That point is not at issue.

But if man does not live by bread alone much less does he live by national statistics. These statistics of vast national production and vast consumption have meaning, ultimately, only in terms of individual Americans and their families. And where in these statistics do we find the American family which struggles against the high cost of living on an income of $3,000 or $4,000 or less a year? How well does $3,000 or $4,000 a year or less take care of a family's needs for food, clothing, shelter and medical services? How well does $3,000 or $4,000 or less provide for the education of children and for a measure of recreation? Yet, in 1958, out of the 45 million families in this nation almost 25% or 11 million had incomes of $3,000 or less and over one-third or 15 million families had incomes of $4,000 or less. Are these families to bask in the reflected glory of the nation's great economic power and affluence or are they to sense the deepening disquiet?

Probe the national statistics more deeply, Mr. President. Put the question to those who live on an old age pittance or on retirement incomes fixed years ago at far lower price levels. What member of the Senate does not know of these people? What Senator's
mail does not bring every day, grim reminders of countless personal tragedies of this kind? The glitter of the nation's power and affluence may obliterate but it does not alleviate the disquiet of these Americans.

Nor does the power and affluence reach the mining families of West Virginia or Montana, nor the textile families in Rhode Island or Massachusetts, nor the men and women in many other parts of the land where millions of willing hands are held in pockets of unemployment or inadequate employment. It does not matter much whether these hands are stilled by automation, by shifting internal markets, by new overseas trade channels, by resource underdevelopment or resource exhaustion, by mergers, by recession-depression or whatever. The hands that are stilled belong to Americans, Americans stranded by the vast waves of industrial change which sweep through the basic economic structure of the nation and break suddenly upon one segment or another of the people. They are hands which belong to Americans shunted aside by forces which are often beyond the power of individuals and localities and states even to comprehend, let alone control.

It has been said that these great forces of change contribute to the welfare of all Americans. The nation is made more powerful by them. The national statistics glow more brightly in consequence of them. That may well be true. In time, the changes --
at least those changes which tend to greater national productivity--undoubtedly bring with them attendant benefits. But, Mr. President, what of the meantime? What of those Americans who feel, now, the back-lash of change? What of those who will feel it in the near future in order that all Americans may ultimately benefit? For them, unfortunately, there is the disquiet today, sensed more deeply than the golden promise of tomorrow.

State of Agriculture as a Factor in the Nation's Disquiet

I turn next to still another source of the nation's deepening disquiet--to the state of American agriculture. We have great farm lands, able farmers and brilliant scientists and technicians. These assets have been combined with mechanical ingenuity to create an incredibly productive agriculture in this nation. There is food in abundance and for that abundance there can only be gratitude.

But, Mr. President, when government stimulates production beyond abundance, beyond super-abundance, when it diverts the energies and resources of the nation, insensibly, into the creation of ever-mounting surpluses, then gratitude gives way to disquiet. It gives way in spreading doubt as to whether we know what we are about. It gives way in a growing public awareness of an enormous waste of effort and resources and of the cynical subordination of the welfare of the nation to the gain of the few.
Whatever justification government agricultural subsidies -- and let us call a spade a spade, for subsidies are what these programs provide--whatever justification they may have had in the past, what is their justification now? The justification, now, can rest only on insuring to working farm families an income sufficient to remain on the land because we find in the family farm unit, beyond mere economics, some special national virtue. I do not question this objective. I question the manner in which it is pursued. Instead of preserving the family farm unit, the number of farms in the nation has declined from 5.6 million in 1950 to 4.6 million in 1959, a loss of one million in a decade. Last year, moreover, farm income fell 16.8 per cent despite a program which has cost the American people billions of dollars to operate.

And still the surpluses accumulate. The government, today, owns or has under loan a total of $7 billion of agricultural products. Storage and other handling costs alone may well exceed a billion dollars in 1960.

In short, what began as a decent effort to preserve the family farm has become a monstrous thing. It has swallowed the concept and is disgorging in its place a new get-rich-quick class of government-subsidized farm industrialists and surplus-storage operators.
Is there any wonder, Mr. President, that the disquiet deepens? It deepens among those who seek only an adequate income in order that they may remain on the land. It deepens among all Americans who see no benefit in the form of lower food prices for the billions of public funds which have supported the agricultural programs. It deepens among those who perceive the fundamental immorality of rotting stock-piles of food, even as human beings both at home and abroad hunger for adequate sustenance.

State of Public Services as a Factor in the Nation’s Disquiet

With the threat to peace and the problems of defense, with the human dislocations brought about by rapid industrial and commercial change, and with the chaos in government agricultural programs, we have still not exhausted the sources of the nation’s disquiet. We must inquire into other spheres to grasp its full dimension.

Ask, Mr. President, after our capacity to prevent the stoppage of production in basic industries, such as steel, whether such stoppages be due to labor-management disputes or to that which is hardly less damaging to the nation, stoppages in consequence of recession. Note in this connection that steel production was 54.2 million tons below capacity in 1959 largely because of a labor-management dispute. But in 1958, it was 55.5 millions tons below capacity largely because of the business recession.
Ask, too, particularly in the West, after the manner in which the power, irrigation and other basic resource needs of our own underdeveloped states are being met, even as we recognize and strive to fill such needs abroad.

Ask in the metropolitan areas, whether they contain 50,000, 500,000 or 5 million or more citizens, ask of the urban decay which spreads its blight of slums and attendant evils, spreads it faster than rebuilding takes place. Ask, too, of the strangulation of cities in the toils of inadequate roads and transportation facilities and the growing contamination of the very air that is breathed. Ask of the reliability of the nation's supply of water, pure and simple, over the next few years in the light of rising demand and of an industrial, atomic and human pollution which more and more clogs the lakes, streams and rivers.

Ask, too, after the nation's children and youth and whether or not they are receiving equal and adequate opportunity for education and sufficient constructive outlet for their energies.

Ask after the mounting crime rate and the inadequacies of the machinery of law enforcement. And ask after the adequacy of the nation's correctional procedures and facilities.

Ask after the nation's sick, particularly the aged and the mentally ill, of the vast human need for care and cure which now goes
unfilled and, in the face of it, the super-commercialization of the drug industry and the hospitals, if not indeed, of the medical profession itself.

Ask after the nation's recreational facilities, particularly in the crowded East--the adequacy of the wilderness areas, parks and shorelines which must meet growing needs now and explosive needs in the near future. It was these areas which our late colleague, the Senator from Oregon (Mr. Neuberger), with great foresight and dedication, sought to safeguard for all, for the future as well as the present, against the inroads and depredations of the predatory and the unthinking.

I know, Mr. President, these problems and many others of the same kind have been with the nation for a long time. I know that someone, somewhere--the states or the localities or private citizens--someone is supposed to be taking care of these matters. But the dangerous strains do not lessen; they grow more intense and these inner weaknesses mock the vast power and affluence of the nation which can mask them no longer.

This nation has suffered a long night of national neglect in its ordinary and essential public services no less than in matters of defense and peace; no less than in its management of the implications of vast and sweeping industrial and agricultural change.
All of us who presume to exercise leadership and authority share the responsibility for this neglect. That the responsibility is multi-sided, however, does not exonerate those who exercise the highest powers in the land. In this nation, whether it is recognized or not, it is the Federal Administration which sets the tone. And as the tone is set so rings the bell.

Foreign Policy and the Nation's Disquiet

In no other area is the authority and, hence, the responsibility of the Federal Administration, more clear-cut and absolute than in the conduct of this nation's quest for a durable peace and adequate national defense. Individuals have not stood in the way here. Nor have the localities or States. Nor, in truth, has the Congress.

All that has been asked by the Administration for defense and more has been provided. What has been honestly sought for foreign policy has not been denied, including year in and year out, the President's request for foreign aid. If we have become more reluctant of late in matters of foreign aid, we have become so only as the evidence of aimlessness, of ineffectiveness and waste in administration and of political manipulation has accumulated. In spite of this reluctance, Mr. President, I say again that the Administration has had the cooperation and the support of the Congress in all decisive matters of foreign relations and defense.
Far East

What has the Administration done with this cooperation and support? Has it directed foreign relations in a fashion which has closed the gap between the hope and the reality of peace? Have we really moved closer to peace, even in Korea, as has been proclaimed or implied over the year? I am not aware that in Korea we did more than convert the unwritten truce, which had prevailed in that country for months prior, into a written truce, when in July 1953, the Administration signed an agreement with the Communists.

To be sure, Americans are not now being killed in combat in Korea; that is a source of deep gratitude. To draw relief from a truce in Korea, however, should not blind us to the fact that there is no peace in Korea. To call peace that which is no peace at all is to make a mockery of the sacrifices of those who gave so much in Korea.

The fact is that in the seven years which have elapsed since the signing of the Korean truce not one further step towards a durable peace has been taken in that region. If there is any doubt on that score, read the sterile debates at the United Nations on the Korean issue, year in and year out. The ideas do not change. Even the words change scarcely at all.
In short, the situation in Korea remains as it was in 1953 except, so far as can be determined, the Chinese are no longer directly engaged with large numbers of military forces in that country and we are. The situation is, as it was, a makeshift, supported on our part by armed forces and by hundreds of millions of dollars of aid for South Korea each year. And I may add in this connection that some of the recent reports emanating from that nation suggest—to say the least—a grave and shocking misuse of this aid.

If there is not peace in Korea, where in the Far East is it to be found? At Formosa? In Viet Nam? In Laos? All we have obtained in these places and others in Asia is time. We have obtained it at the cost of billions of dollars in aid and a vast and costly deployment of American military forces in the Far East. And more and more, Mr. President, it appears that we have bought time only in order that we may continue to buy time.

What has time, this costly time, produced with regard to the key action of China? We have stood by while the Chinese Communists have consolidated their position on the Asian mainland and vastly expanded their power until its use along its borders grows more arrogant and aggressive.
With a closed-eyes policy we have done nothing more than re-inforce our own official ignorance and diplomatic isolation with regard to one of the most crucial areas of the globe. This policy has not brought about the downfall of Peking regime but it has made certain that a new generation of tens of millions of Chinese will come of age in this decade, with a high degree of hatred in their hearts for this nation and its people.

Middle East

Have we done better elsewhere? In the Middle East are we closer to peace now than a decade ago? Countless millions of dollars of public funds have been thrown into currying favor with this leader or that. Time and again, we have seen this practice blow up in our faces and still those who manipulate the policies and administer the public funds do not learn.

For some strange reason, we have persisted in ignoring the one course which might conceivably contribute to a durable peace in the Middle East, insofar as it rests within our capacity so to contribute. That course is one of clear and consistent cooperation with any nation in that area which is prepared to observe a consistent pattern of responsibility and forbearance in the face of the grave problems of peace in that area, a willingness
to search now for peaceful and permanent solutions. If that course will not succeed, then I wonder at what strange reckoning we continue to pour millions upon millions of dollars of public funds haphazardly into the Middle East year after year. This attempt to placate the implacable, to purchase the cooperation of the uncooperative with resources of the people of the United States is as immature as the immaturity to which it is addressed. Yet the attempt goes on and on and there is not yet in sight an end to it. And peace—a durable peace is no closer in the Middle East but even now, once again, edges towards collapse.

Europe and Germany

Are the prospects better in Europe? A foundation for peace was built a long time ago in Western Europe, with the Marshall Plan, with the practical initiation of the European movement towards integration, and with the whole encased in the North Atlantic Treaty alliance. Yet, this foundation can give way. It can give way through internal dissensions within Western Europe, and a failure to adjust the institutions of Western unity to ever changing circumstances. It can give way in Germany and particularly over the issue of Berlin.

Once again the forces of incipient conflict are rising at Berlin to a point of naked and devastating confrontation. Are we more ready now in a diplomatic or in a practical military sense for
the 2nd German crisis than we were for the 1st? Are we equipped in policy with new and powerful ideas which might hold the promise of peace without appeasement? Are we joined with the Western European nations in a deep sense of common purpose as the crisis approaches? We are on paths to summits, Mr. President, but apparently, we have yet to find the paths for continued Western unity and for a closing of the division in Germany and Europe, a closing upon which peace ultimately depends.

Underdeveloped Areas and Aid

If we are no closer to peace, a durable peace in Germany and Europe, can anyone say that there exists the conditions of progress on which a stable peace depends in the underdeveloped regions of Asia and Africa indeed, even in this hemisphere? The Administration uses words of constructive challenge in justification of its request for billions of dollars of aid for these areas each year. But, Mr. President, they are the words of a decade ago and they are tired words. The same clarion has sounded too many times and its notes grow feeble. The inspiration of the Point 4 Program of helping others to help themselves has been exhausted in a labyrinth of bureaucracy and in an haphazard accumulation of activity for activity's sake. More and more people at home, no less than people abroad, cease to hear the promise and ask after the results. Still we go on and on largely in the same pattern of aimlessness and endlessness that has persisted in this program since the Marshall Plan came to a close.
Arms Control

Nor are we nearer to peace, Mr. President, in the matter of arms control. Fifteen years of costly negotiation, within the United Nations and without, have yet to yield one signed and sealed agreement of substance. The Soviet Union announces cuts in its fighting forces. We make them. In the most deadly fields of missiles and nuclear weapons, the competition to refine the instruments of universal annihilation goes on. Nuclear testing is under a moratorium imposed by world opinion but clouds, heavy with the rain of radioactive death, still hang ominously over the earth.

Once there was one, then two, then three, and now four members of the nuclear club. The count-up is likely to continue as the scientific and technical bars to membership come down. More and more fingers will probe the triggers of weapons of immense human destruction, weapons primed and reprimed to respond ever-more quickly.

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Mr. President, it is this panorama of a world, less, not more peaceful today, in any real sense of the word peace, than it was a decade and a half ago, which is unfolding its deepening disquiet
in the consciousness of the people of the United States. This grim and clouded panorama spreads a growing public awareness that our policy has become, less a positive search for peace and more a vast and costly holding action. It is no wonder that the question is more and more asked in the nation: Why has not more been done for peace with what the American people have been willing to do?

National Defense and the Nation's Disquiet

Even as this question is asked in the realm of foreign policy where the Russians or the Chinese still offer an excuse--in part accurate and in part glib--for our own inadequacies and inertia, it must be asked even more in matters of national defense. At the end of a decade and a half of spending, 500 billion dollars later, a half-trillion dollars later, we are now at a point where the gravest uncertainties exist among those who should know, as to our military capacity and readiness to defend ourselves.

What has been said in public, what can be seen with one's own eyes and heard with one's own ears, is sufficient to persuade me and, I believe, other Americans that there are grounds for concern, deep concern over the operation of the national defense system, quite apart from the Soviet threat, the Chinese threat or whatever. There
are grounds for concern which have to do with our own short-comings and they cannot be dismissed by general reference to motes in other eyes.

There are grounds for deep concern over our rate of achievement in space technology in a world which, for better or worse, increasingly measures national competence with the yardstick of advanced scientific progress. There are grounds for concern over the present system of administration by which the vital questions of defense are interrelated with the vital questions of foreign policy, the system by which these questions are answered by decisions if, indeed, they are answered at all. There are grounds for concern over the manner in which the supposedly unified Defense Department is organized and staffed to fulfill its primary functions of military defense at the direction of responsible civilian authority. There are grounds for concern over the manner in which the Department of Defense handles the public funds of the people of the United States.

What other conclusion can be drawn from the visible gaps in space exploration? What other conclusion can be drawn from the worlds of experienced Americans who have been appearing before the Special Committee on National Policy Machinery under the Chairmanship of the able Senator from Washington (Mr. Jackson) which suggest that the premium in this Administration is on the avoidance rather than
the making of decisions by responsible political authority? What other conclusion can be drawn from the conflicting testimony of representatives of the Air Force, the Navy and the Army as they push for appropriations for their particular service almost as though the others were non-existent, almost as though it was incumbent upon each service alone to defend the nation without aid or interference from the others? What other conclusion can be drawn from the revelations of the waste of enlisted manpower and the abuse of the privileges of rank, the revelations which have been made by Congressman Kowalski and others in the other House? What other conclusion can be drawn from the--there is only one word for them--stupid--training manuals of the Defense Department which were recently brought to light? What other conclusion is to be drawn from what is, to say the least, a careless regard for conflict of interest on the part of many retired officers--civilian and military--now retained at high salary by firms whose primary business is selling to the Defense Department? What other conclusion is to be drawn from what would have been, except for the pressures from Congress, the passing over for promotion and, hence, the retirement of one of the most creative officers in the service--the admiral who was the driving force behind the development of the atomic-powered submarine?
What other conclusion can be drawn, when a decade and a half after the urgency of World War II, seven years after the urgency of the Korean Conflict, the Defense Department still places 80% of its $20-$25 billion of procurement orders each year on the urgent and extraordinarily expensive basis of cost-plus contracts without competitive bids?

What other conclusion can be drawn when we learn that the Defense Department wrote off—and got rid of—in 1958, $.5 billion of its public assets at a fraction of value? When we learn that through mistakes of judgment and what appear to be fantastic concepts of need and obsolescence, the practice of write-off of assets in something of this same magnitude, is repeated over and over each year and is likely, when the figures are in, to reach $10 billions for 1959? Even the mountains of surplus agricultural products rotting in the warehouses at government expense pale into insignificance in comparison with this waste. Note in this connection that the British defense establishment has a budget of only $4 to $5 billion annually. In other words, the British operate their entire military establishment—Army, Navy and Air Force—each year at about half of the cost of the assets which our Defense Department abandons each year, in short, at about half the cost of what our military establishment—avoidably or unavoidably—wastes each year.
Mr. President, I do not know whether we need to keep a third, as some have suggested, or a half or two-thirds of the Strategic Air Command aloft at all times to insure our national survival. I do not know whether we need to convert the basement playgrounds into bomb-proof shelters or otherwise to burrow into the earth, as others have suggested, in order to insure our national survival.

I do believe, however, that we need decisions by the responsible elected leadership rather than this aimless drift either through mutual accommodation or unrelated action among the swollen bureaucracies of administration if we are to have even a chance to assure our national survival in freedom. I do believe that we need to bring about an alert, streamlined and disciplined administration of the military establishment if we are to have even a chance of insuring our national survival in freedom.

It is becoming crystal clear that the ills of national defense, no less than those of foreign policy, are not of a kind which lend themselves to cure by additional injections of dollars.

Concluding Comments

Mr. President, in giving voice to these thoughts, to this deepening disquiet which is spreading through the nation, I said and I say again that all, all who presume to exercise leadership
and authority share responsibility for the present state of the nation's public affairs. That is true of the local official, no less than the state official, no less than the Congress and the Administration. But as the public power is not equally divided so, too, is the responsibility for the deepening disquiet in the nation not equally divided.

If the remarks which I am now concluding seem to apply more pointedly to the Federal Government and to its Administration it is because the Federal Administration—regardless of party—wields the primary public authority and occupies the citadel of national leadership. That is clearly the case, as I have noted, in regard to matters of peace and defense. It is more and more the case as regards the fibers of the public services which bind together the nation and safeguard its inner health and vitality.

This era, Mr. President, began as a crusade with the bright promise of change for the better. It began with the promise of peace; it began with an almost built-in guarantee of more effective defense. It began with the assurance of the new broom that sweeps clean. This era, Mr. President, is ending with the broom still in the closet, with the inner problems of the nation accumulating, through neglect and evasion, at a rapid rate, a rate the more shameful because of the vaunted power
and affluence of the nation. This era is ending with the nation, relatively, far less secure than it was fifteen years ago, less secure than it was a decade ago, still less secure than it was five years ago. This era is ending with peace, durable peace, still as elusive as the Abominable Snow Man of the Himalayas, pursued from Summit to Summit by one goodwill expedition after another.

Whatever is achieved in the remaining months one certainty there is: There will pass to the next administration--Republican or Democratic--a monumental accumulation of unfilled needs for public action. The needs will not be met by crusades which crumble after the first flush of political victory. They will not be filled by the manipulation of words. They will be filled by an administration which, with the cooperation of the Congress, accepts rather than evades the responsibilities of the 2nd half of the 20th Century. They will be filled by an administration which serves, equitably, all the people of the United States. They will be filled by an administration which does more, far more, with what the people are willing to do for peace and for defense. They will be filled by an administration which has the capacity to lead and the determination to lead, by an administration which calls forth from this government and from this people a new dedication to the unfinished work of freedom.