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Speeches, A Time of Trouble

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A TIME OF TROUBLE

These are difficult times in which to meet with a student body. There is still Viet Nam. There is still the volcanic condition of the nation's cities. The questions on your minds, I know, are many. The answers, I regret to say, are few. I cannot tell you what I do not know.

I can tell you that we have come to a point of deep trouble in this nation. We have come to it for many reasons. Most of all, we have come to it because we have indulged for a long time in the luxury of ignoring or tinting the nation's problems. For too long, we have downgraded their immensity and their intensity.

It is a measure of our plight at home that we tend to drift with our difficulties rather than confront them. We
drift until an assassination or bonfires of metropolitan dimensions or some such abomination shocks us into the recollection that they are still there. It is a measure of our plight abroad that it has taken three years and many thousands of lives from the President's first call for a negotiated end to the war in Viet Nam to the first uncertain touching of the antennas of the negotiators in Paris.

We are in a time of trouble. Yet it does have the virtue that it may be convertible into a time of awakening. Let me consider with you, therefore, some of the sources of the difficulties which confront us both within the nation and in our relations with the rest of the world.

In recent weeks, as you know, many of the nation's cities have erupted in showers of violence. Some of us reside in these cities. Some of us have our homes in quiet places a few miles away or many hundreds of miles away. Yet, can any of us be truly isolated from the violence of the cities? Can we be
insulated from these immense social heavings? Can we be impervious to tremors which shake the ideals and institutional foundations of the American experience in freedom?

To say the least, it is alien to witness, within our borders, displays of massive disorder. It is disturbing to live in the eerie stillness of curfews which are enforced by federal troops. It is awesome to contemplate the possibilities of more violence patterned after that which occurred in mid-1967 and then, once more, a few weeks ago.

If outbreaks occur again, let there be no doubt that they will be suppressed; that is inevitable. Responsible government must act to ensure the security of persons and property.

In any given situation, it is possible to quarrel with how the domestic tranquility is maintained. In any given situation, it is possible to find fault with the use of the police power; some may say excessive and others inadequate. In the end, however, there can be little debate that it is counter-violence which will be invoked in the face of violence.
Whatever view is taken of the recent outbursts, one message which they conveyed was clear. It tells us, in terms which cannot be put aside, that there are highly combustible substances gathered in our society. These substances, to be sure, are compounds of racial inequities, frustrations, and arrogances. They, however, also include the inadequacy of a whole range of public services. They also contain the problems of concentrated poverty with its retinue of human disabilities and brooding discontents.

This is the stuff of urban violence.

At the moment, the racial factor may concern us most deeply. Racial tensions, however, are but one manifestation of the social combustibility in this nation. The fact is that a high level of violence has been endemic since the beginning and in recent years it has been on the rampage.

It would, perhaps, be the path of least resistance for me, and the Montanans whom I represent in the Senate of the United States, to turn our backs on the crisis of the great cities.
Montana is a spacious place with a scant population. Many of the problems which assume huge proportions elsewhere affect Montana hardly at all. In Montana there is plenty of room. The water is pure. So is the air. Our largest city has a total population of 55,000, a fraction of the slum populations of some of the great metropolitan centers. Yet, we are one nation and Montana is part of it. If cities in other states of the Union lose their habitability, the nation loses, and Montana loses with them.

The problems of the urban areas arise from developments of many years. Most significant, perhaps, have been the vast migrations to these centers in response to an evolving economic technology and a great growth in the population. The process of human concentration, at first, attracted little notice. For a long time it aroused little concern. Now, we find three-quarters of the nation's people in the cities and adjacent suburbia.

If these areas are already caught up in a maze of problems, it is not hard to imagine what the situation could be
like by the year 2000. During the next three decades, the nation's population count is expected to rise from its present 200 million level to 350 million.

The shape of the cities of the next century is still only dimly seen. What is already only too painfully visible, however, are the imperatives for the survival of the cities in the final years of the 20th century. There is, today, a plethora of urgent needs. To cite but a few, there is a need for jobs and a need for manpower training and development. There is a need for public health, housing, and recreation. There is a need for sufficient means of transportation. There is need for fully complemented, proficient, and professional police, fire, and other protectional departments of government. There is a need for educational systems which are enlightened and excellent. There is a need for an assured supply of clean water and air.

Relentless effort is going to be required to meet these complex and ever-growing needs. It will take imagination,
skill, and labor. It will take a dedicated leadership and the combined effort of existing institutions and others which have yet to be devised. Money alone will not supply the answer. But make no mistake, it is going to take money—a great deal of money—to cope with the problems of urban habitability.

The responsibility for the cities cannot rest on government alone—much less on the federal government alone. Nonetheless, the role of government cannot be minimized. Responsible government must be responsive to the concerns and requirements of all of its citizens. It must care about the nation's safety and its health. It must care about the youth of the nation and the old. It must care about the jobless, the ill-housed, the poverty-stricken—all those too powerless to help themselves. And it must concern itself, too, with those too powerful. In the final analysis, government must care about the content and caliber of the total environment in which the life of the nation is lived.
Within that framework, the role of the federal government is, of necessity, a substantial one. It can be a source of inspiration, leadership, and direction. It can be a source of action—planned, balanced, and well-knit. It can be a channel of resources of a scope sufficient to have a constructive and durable impact on the localities.

During the Administration of President Kennedy, it began to be realized that the federal government would have to assume a significant role in solving the multiplying problems of the cities. During the present Administration, these beginnings have been augmented. Together, the Administration and the Congress have formulated a number of programs and plans directed specifically towards the transformation of city life. There come to mind, for example, the establishment of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Transportation, the Model Cities Program, Rent Supplements, and the Safe Streets and Crime Control Act.
Innumerable measures which can bring to bear a constructive impact—direct or indirect—on the urban areas have been approved by Congress in recent years. The package is not perfect but it is a good beginning. As a member of the Senate, I say this, undoubtedly, with a measure of subjectivity. Nevertheless, by any measure, it seems to me that the Senate has passed a range of inaugural legislation of great relevance to the problems which are posed by the progressive urbanization of life in the United States. Taken together, these measures put into place a foundation on which to build anew the regions into which the preponderance of the nation's people is moving. What is most needed now is the will, skill, and money to adjust and to engage this basic legislation in effective action.

In this connection, we face the grim fact that the war in Viet Nam has been siphoning off federal fiscal resources at a rate in excess of $25 billion a year, in an overall military budget which in the coming fiscal year will probably reach $80
billion. By contrast, federal spending which is earmarked specifically for problems of the cities is likely to amount to less than $3 billion.

The fact is that urban needs compete for federal funds with the requirements of Viet Nam, and other defense costs, and they compete with many other domestic undertakings of the federal government. Both the President, largely through the Bureau of the Budget, and the Congress, largely through its committees, are weighing these competing requirements. The choices of priority and emphasis are no easier now than they have ever been. Nor will the choices which are likely be all wise choices. However each has his own view of wisdom in these matters and I accept the fact that my own view is but one of many. Nevertheless, I happen to regard as of fundamental significance to the future of the nation the critical situation which exists in and around the cities. What is most important, I believe, is that we do not mislead ourselves into thinking that we have acted adequately when,
in truth, we have scarcely begun to scratch the surface of this difficulty.

To rebuild the disintegrating fabric of these cores of population throughout the United States will require far more than the present efforts of the federal government. It is also going to require far more than the present efforts of state and local governments. It is also going to require far more than the present efforts of private initiative and enterprise.

To be sure, there are questions as to our capacity—financial and otherwise—to meet the requirements. We must ask ourselves, however, what is the alternative? What of the mounting costs of police, fire, and military protection in cities which can be kept in an uneasy peace only by tear gas, clubs, firearms, and curfews? What of the quality of American life in that setting? What of the costs of the immense property losses from riots? What of the loss of economic momentum which follows a wave of destructiveness in cities? What of the toll of the injured and
the dead? What of the extremisms which are born in the wastelands of a nation's fears? If violence and counterviolence are to become the arbiters of the inner life of this nation, what of the future of freedom?

There is no blinking the fact that the war in Viet Nam has hampered our ability to respond to the troubles in the cities. That is the fact. What has been done, however, cannot be undone. The problem is to try to bring the war in Viet Nam to an honorable conclusion. Now, at the first contacts for peace, it may be helpful to recall the origins of the involvement in Viet Nam. It may serve to put into better perspective whatever transpires in Paris in the days, weeks, or months ahead.

One aspect of the tragedy of Viet Nam is that our involvement began in the most well-intentioned actions. This nation went into Viet Nam a decade and a half ago out of a desire to help the people of Viet Nam. When I visited what was then French Indo-China in 1953, it was one political entity. It was
a colony in ferment, on the verge of independence. It is now

A decade and a half ago, there were scarcely 200

Americans in all of Viet Nam, and they were welcomed in the North

as well as in the South. They were in Cambodia as well as Laos.

So slight was this nation's contact with the region that the

presence of myself and an associate for a few days doubled the

U. S. population in Laos. At the time, only two Americans were

to be found in the entire country.

It was not realized, then, what would come from what

was an essentially limited effort at "foreign aid" in Indo-China.

It was still little realized even as late as 1962, when the level

of aid, and notably military aid, was already high but Americans

were still not directly involved in the conflict.

We know now. In the past few years, the war service

lists have reached into almost every American community. There
are 526,000 U. S. servicemen in Viet Nam alone, not to speak of those in Thailand or the forces of the 7th Fleet off the coast as well as the back-up forces in Okinawa, the Philippines, and Guam. In this year, as of April 20th, 5,688 Americans have already been killed in the war. That total—for a third of a year—is already over four times the number of American deaths in all of 1965, more than the total number of deaths in all of 1966, and more than half the number killed in 1967. What has been suffered by this nation in the rising tempo of the conflict has also been suffered, and far more, by the people of Viet Nam—North and South, civilian and military, friend and foe.

The changing intensity of our involvement ought not to obscure the purposes which took this nation into Viet Nam in the first place. As at the beginning, the only valid purposes today are limited purposes. There is not now and there has never been a mandate to take over the responsibility for Viet Nam from the Vietnamese. Whatever commitment we have had, has been to support
not to supplant. It is not now anymore than it ever was an American responsibility to win Viet Nam for any particular group of Vietnamese.

There is no doubt that the immense military effort which we have made in the past three years has gone a long way to alter the character of what was once an inner struggle among Vietnamese. Nevertheless, in the end, the future of Viet Nam depends not on us but on the Vietnamese themselves. It is their country; they live in it. They will be living in it long after we are gone from it.

Let us be clear on this point: This nation cannot and will not lighten its commitment easily or casually, at Paris or anywhere else. Let us be equally clear, however, that there is no obligation to pour out the blood and resources of this nation until South Viet Nam is made safe for one Vietnamese faction or another. On the contrary, there is a profound obligation to the people of the United States to conserve that blood
and those resources and, to the people of Viet Nam, there is an
obligation to avoid the destruction of their land and society
even in the name of saving them.

There is an obligation to try to establish with all
Vietnamese a basis for bringing together the struggling forces
in South Viet Nam. There is an obligation to help end the war,
to bind up the wounds of war and to rebuild the ravages of war.
In short, there is a deep obligation to try to bring about a
restoration of a just peace.

That is what the present Paris meeting is all about.
President Johnson has repeatedly stated that this nation's objec-
tive is "...only that the people of South Viet Nam be allowed to
guide their own country in their own way." He has stated that we
are prepared to begin to move out in a matter of months after a
satisfactory settlement is achieved.

It is not at all certain that the negotiations at
Paris will bring the conflict to an honorable conclusion in
the near future. In the end, negotiations may prove no more effective than military escalation has been in bringing the war to an acceptable conclusion. But the effort which is being made is of the utmost importance to this nation, to the people of Viet Nam, and to the world. That should be borne in mind in the difficult days ahead.

The President has taken the political content out of the issue of Viet Nam by taking himself out of the Presidential campaign. It would be my hope that the rest of us would avoid putting the issue of Viet Nam into a political context. The efforts of the President and his negotiators, at this time, should receive every possible understanding and support.

The dimensions of what is at stake in Paris are illustrated by the fiscal problems which confront us. In recent years, the cost of the Vietnamese conflict has contributed greatly to a steep rise in national expenditures. There has not been, however, any tax rise, or wage and price controls, or rationing,
or, in fact, any of the economic restraints which have been associated with past wars.

For a long time, the economic barometers have been trying to tell us that we were attempting too much, especially abroad, with too little in the way of national sacrifice. For too long, we have tended to ignore the warnings. Piled high, now, is an accumulation of huge budgetary deficits. Piled high are great annual deficits in the balance of international payments.

We have arrived at a moment of reckoning.

Even though we may devoutly wish it, we cannot count on a prompt settlement in Paris. We cannot even count on a slackening in the tempo of the war; witness, for example, the renewed offensives against Saigon and other cities of the past few days. In the circumstances, we cannot anticipate any prompt reduction in the costs which arise from the war. It is imperative, therefore, to take the fiscal measures which the President has urged and which, hopefully, may act to keep a measure of stability in the nation's economy.
Congress is only now coming to grips with the ten percent surcharge on income tax which the President requested as a matter of urgency, more than a year ago. A tax increase is an inevitability of the war; Congress is trying to weave into the surcharge a reduction of several billion dollars in federal expenditures. It seems to me that if the Congress is going to insist upon a $6 billion reduction, as a current bill proposes, then the Congress has a responsibility which it ought not to shirk. It has a responsibility to say where these reductions should be made.

I have my own ideas on that question but, I hasten to add, no assurance that they will prevail. I do not believe, for example, that wholesale cuts can be made with impunity in those parts of the budget which affect the domestic difficulties of the nation. What is possible, in my view, is to single out for curtailment less pressing fields of government activity. As an illustration, there is the multi-billion dollar space program.
That program is a fascinating and mind-expanding adventure for the nation. As far as I am concerned, however, there is no persuasive reason why we cannot take our far-out adventures in more modest doses. It seems to me, too, that many public works projects can also be held in abeyance, however much they may delight one particular locality or another.

Insofar as military expenditures are concerned, there cannot be any stinting on expenditures which are necessary for the forces in Viet Nam. The men who are there have gone not by choice but by virtue of the policies of the government. What can be provided to them to enhance their chances of survival and to carry out their responsibilities under those policies will be supplied.

However, the Vietnamese expenditures are probably less than a third of the expenses of the Department of Defense. The Department's overall costs, in turn, add up to almost half of all present outlays of the federal government. Apart from VietNam
all unlikely that there are hutches of waste and extravagance in the labyrinth of the immense defense budget.

At the very least, the closest scrutiny ought to be given by the Congress to new and far-reaching proposals which may be proposed in the name of national defense. There is one now, for example, which calls for the creation of logistic ships which would be more or less permanently stationed in the various oceans of the world. The basic concept of the proposal is that these ships would be ready to supply and support, in an instant, a U. S. military action anywhere in the world. Whatever the technical virtuosity of this concept, the ability to move armed forces quickly is not always a virtue in international relations. To act in haste with military power in foreign policy may well bring a long aftermath of repentance at leisure. Unless we presume to play policeman to the world, therefore, such projects are more than wasteful; they can be downright dangerous to the security of this nation.
If the careful screening of defense expenditures is necessary in this time of fiscal straits, it seems to me that there is also a great need to cut back obsolete overseas programs of questionable value. Over the years since World War II, we have put over $128 billion into grants and loans of aid to 121 countries abroad. It is debatable whether these massive infusions of economic and military assistance, particularly in recent years, have always served either the fundamental interests of the people of other nations or our own. The great effectiveness of the Marshall Plan in the preservation of freedom in Western Europe, two decades ago, has had only the faintest of echoes elsewhere and elsewhere in the world. Aid in Africa and Asia has not necessarily spurred progress or strengthened freedom. Indeed, on occasion, it appears to have offered a means for evading the one and stunting the other.

I would point out, too, that for 17 years, six divisions of United States troops have been assigned to Europe in pursuance of our commitment to the North Atlantic Treaty
Organization. The accumulated costs of this deployment runs into many billions of dollars. Its debilitating effect on the foreign exchange resources of the nation in recent years has been very substantial. It has long seemed to me—long before the nation began to experience its current financial difficulties—that of the six U.S. divisions in Western Europe, four with their accompanying dependents, could be redeployed to this nation. That has been my view, not on the basis of penury, but on the basis of principle and policy.

It is true, nevertheless, that a redeployment of a substantial number of the U.S. forces would fit into the fiscal needs of the nation at this time. In my judgment, this redeployment would not alter the significance of our pledge of mutual assistance under NATO to the peace of Europe. It would bring our policies in Europe into line with the realities of Europe, almost a quarter of a century away from World War II. Indeed, it would not be out of step with the NATO policies of the Europeans them-
selves. They have made only the most limited commitments of military forces to NATO and even these commitments have been drastically reduced in recent years. At the same time, the Europeans have gone far in economic, cultural, and even political rapprochement with the nations of Eastern Europe.

A reduction of our forces in Europe, in sum, would reverse what I believe has been a most undesirable tendency in the long-standing European policies of this nation. It is almost as though we have regarded only ourselves in step on the question of supplying forces for the defense of Western Europe. That is a dangerous tendency which could lead us, first, to a position of isolated internationalism. From that, it is but a short distance to national isolation. And, in my judgment, there is no place for either isolated internationalism or national isolation in our foreign policies, if the fundamental interests of this nation and world peace are to be served.
I would end these remarks on the same note with which I opened them. We are, indeed, in a time of trouble. The convergence of the problem of the cities and the problem of Viet Nam brings us to the opening of, perhaps, the most critical era in the history of the nation.

If it is a time of trouble, however, it is also a time of testing. We will find, I am confident, within this nation and, more and more, among the young people of this nation, the resources of intelligence and integrity to define the evolving problems of our times. We will find, I profoundly believe, the courage, the conviction, and the concern to face them and to resolve them.