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VIETNAM MORATORIUM ADDRESS BY SENATOR MUSKIE

Mr. HART. Mr. President, the distinguished Senator from Maine (Mr. MUSKIE) participated in yesterday's Vietnam moratorium—as did a number of us in this body—by going home and talking with and listening to his own constituents.

Because the remarks of the Senator from Maine at Bates College are exceptionally to the point, and instructive for all who will heed them, I ask unanimous consent that his address be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the address was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

ADDRESS BY SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE

I have been asked why I chose to speak at Bates College tonight.

I came to Bates because I believe today's moratorium can be a time for learning. For me it is a chance to continue an education started on this campus many years ago.

Today's protest is a sign of concern and frustration. It is a sign of broken communications.

There are those who say there is nothing to learn from the moratorium. There are those who downgrade the right to petition.

I say that on the issues of Vietnam we have much to learn from each other, and we can only learn if we are willing to listen to each other and to reason with each other.

This applies to the president and to those who protest. Only in this way can we develop policies on Vietnam which can meet our national interests and end the ugly divisions caused by our involvement there. I regret that the President has not seen this day as an opportunity to unite rather than divide the country. His participation, in a forum of his choosing, could have added a constructive dimension to this national dialogue.

We are engaged in a unique and so far awkward experiment. We are engaged in an effort to change a major aspect of our foreign policy in public view, while our country is involved in a war and in diplomatic negotiations to end that war.

Our national debate over the wisdom of past policies, the validity of present policies, and our alternatives for future policies is open for world-wide inspection. The magnitude of today's moratorium, for example, transmitted almost instantaneously by radio and television, will have a significant impact in Washington, in Paris, in Moscow, in Hanoi, and in Saigon.

We cannot predict either the nature or the precise direction of the changes we shall cause. We may never be able to measure our impact, but we can be sure our voices will be heard.

That fact is one which should not be ignored. If we mean to be heard—if we mean to change the course of events—then we must be conscious of the responsibility we have assumed.

The right to have a voice in the development of public policy carries with it a responsibility for the results of that policy. Our proposals may not be adopted, but what we say and how we say it will help shape what happens at the negotiating table and on the battlefield.

A sense of responsibility for what we say and do should induce some caution, but it should not impose silence. One of the most dangerous assumptions in a democratic society is to conclude that only the President, the Cabinet and his generals are competent to make judgments on the national interest. Their judgment and their actions, which are fallible, must be subjected to constant scrutiny, tempered by the knowledge of our own, individual fallibility. As the President may be wrong, so may we be wrong.

If we want to make constructive proposals about our policies in Vietnam and Southeast Asia, we must understand how we got where we are, what our objectives now are or should be, and what alternatives are available to us.

Our involvement in Vietnam did not happen overnight or through the decision of one man. It was the product of post World War II policies directed against Communist expansionism and threats of expansion in Europe, Asia and elsewhere. It was stimulated by our fear that Communist support for "wars of liberation" would topple the struggling countries of Southeast Asia and disrupt the balance of power in that part of the world. It was encouraged by the concern expressed by governments in that area which felt threatened by Communist China and North Vietnam.

We were persuaded that an aggressive communism threatened to exploit the emerging drive toward nationalism and self-determination which characterized that area. In the uncertain conditions following the withdrawal of Great Britain and France from Southeast Asia, American power seemed to hold a promise of security and support for those who lived in that area.

Although we followed a policy of "limited" involvement in Vietnam, we found our participation growing from technical assistance, money and weapons to massive armed intervention. We sought to buy time for the South Vietnamese against the combined onslaught of the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese, but in the process we made the struggle an American war and imposed terrible burdens on ourselves at home and abroad.

Time has changed our perspective on conditions in Vietnam. What once seemed clear is now uncertain. What once could be described in terms of black and white is now gray. We ask ourselves hard questions:

Should Vietnam have been divided by the Geneva Accords?

Should we have supported the political arrangements forecast by those Accords?

To what extent was the Vietnamese conflict a case of external aggression and to what extent was it a civil war?

History will render the final verdict on the wisdom of our decision to enter the Vietnam conflict. Our task is more immediate—to set new policies where old plans no longer apply, and to bring peace where there is none today.

We are engaged in the search for a way to end the fighting and the killing, to give the Vietnamese people the opportunity to work out their own political destiny, and to lay the groundwork for a more appropriate United States policy in Southeast Asia. Each of us has engaged in that search in his or her own way.

In the process I have made two trips to that part of the world—one as a member of the Mansfield Mission in 1965 and one as a member of the 1967 election observers group. I have read extensively and consulted with men who know the problems of Vietnam intimately.

I have reached some conclusions on what may be the best alternative strategies and policies, conscious of Clark Clifford's observation that "to reach a conclusion and to implement it are not the same, especially when one does not have the ultimate power of decision."

I offer my conclusions, not as one who has an absolute conviction of his own infallibility, but as one who seeks to contribute to a constructive policy for ourselves and for the people of Southeast Asia.

First, I believe our primary objective—for the Vietnamese as well as for American soldiers—should be to end the fighting and killing in Vietnam.

Second, I believe we should do what we can to advance the prospects for a political settlement in Vietnam. We should not design or impose that settlement, but we should do what we can to make it possible.

Third, I believe we should reexamine the nature of our interests in Southeast Asia and the kinds of efforts we can prudently make to help Asian nations achieve the economic, social and political stability they want and need.

It is clearly the deepening conviction of the American people that we must end our present involvement in Vietnam. That conviction must control our policy.

That fact is reflected in a number of proposals and policies for:

Disengagement;
De-Americanization of the war;
Withdrawal of American forces in accordance with a variety of formulas and timetables;

De-escalation of combat activities;
Ceasefires.

Implicit in most of these proposals are the twin objectives:

An end to American involvement—accomplished in a way which will enable the South Vietnamese to carry on without us—as soon as possible—in the event a negotiated settlement has not been achieved in the meantime.

The various formulas for withdrawals raise a number of questions:

1. Should we commit ourselves to a total withdrawal by a specified date?

2. If so, should our timetable be publicly announced?

3. Should we commit ourselves, publicly at least, only as to withdrawal of ground combat forces—leaving in doubt the date and conditions for withdrawing air aid logistical support?

Involved in the answers to such questions are:

The viability of a continued South Vietnamese effort upon our departure;

Maintenance of pressure upon Hanoi and the National Liberation Front to negotiate.

In the light of our involvement and its impact upon the Vietnamese people—whether

or not history judges it to have been wise—do we have a responsibility to be concerned about such questions and the impact that the manner of our departure will have upon the situation we leave behind?

It is difficult to conceive of basically new proposals to add to those already advanced in a variety of forms.

As I have considered all of these, and the questions they raise, I have reached certain conclusions.

1. I believe we must disengage our forces—in an orderly way—as soon as possible.

I believe such a policy is dictated by several considerations:

Our efforts have bought the South Vietnamese people valuable time to develop political and military viability;

Whether or not they have developed the will and the capacity to shape their own future must be tested at some point;

There is no way for us to guarantee the existence of that viability;

In the last analysis, the Vietnamese people must create their own political institutions and select their own political leadership;

The imperatives of our problems here at home dictate that we now leave their future in their hands and turn our attention to our own.

2. I believe that withdrawal of our military forces should be orderly and phased in such a way as to give the South Vietnamese people an opportunity to adjust to it.

We should make it clear to the Government in Saigon that our withdrawal is geared to a specific time frame to which they must adjust.

The other side should be left in doubt—and we should reserve flexibility—as to the phasing out of logistical and air support. This point, it seems to me, could be relevant to their motivation to negotiate.

Even as we plan our withdrawal, it should be our objective to pave the way for a political settlement between the South Vietnam Government, the National Liberation Front, and other groups representing the several social and political tendencies in Vietnam.

The kind of withdrawal proposal advanced by former Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford—of those which have been proposed—illustrates one way to serve this objective. It is based on the assumption that we should continue to seek a negotiated settlement in Paris as we plan for disengagement.

Accordingly, Secretary Clifford has proposed a two-stage plan which would move our ground combat troops out by the end of 1970 and which would provide air and logistical support for somewhat longer. Such a plan, while cutting American casualties, could provide an incentive for the South Vietnamese Government, the North Vietnamese, and the National Liberation Front to reach a negotiated settlement, hopefully even before our withdrawal is complete.

(3) I believe that a standstill cease-fire might open the way for a negotiated settlement and a quick end to the fighting and killing. This suggestion has been resisted by both sides which suggests to me its viability. Such an offer could be accompanied by a reduction in our offensive operations.

If the standstill cease-fire plan succeeded, the withdrawal of United States forces could be accelerated as international peace-keeping forces stepped in to insure observance of the cease-fire. If the standstill cease-fire offer did not lead to an early end to the fighting, a steady and methodical withdrawal plan would offer an effective way of reducing United States involvement and combat losses, while creating the conditions which favor a political settlement.

A standstill cease-fire and a staged withdrawal plan do not rise or fall on the success of the other, but they could reinforce each other. Each recognizes that our commitment and our obligations in Vietnam are to the Vietnamese people, not to a particular regime. Each provides an opportunity for a reasonable political solution. Each reduces the risk of political reprisals at the end of the war.

What I have said, up to this point, is the following:

1. That we commit ourselves to disengagement.

2. That we implement that commitment by means of a phased plan of withdrawal, geared to a timetable.

3. That, in planning our withdrawal, we seek to promote the prospects for a negotiated settlement.

There are those who, in their frustration, are pressing for immediate, unilateral withdrawal. There are others, equally frustrated, who suggest escalating the war again. As to both these suggestions, I raise the following questions:

Is it not possible—

That either course could make less likely a negotiated settlement between the parties?

That either course could mean an inevitable continuation of the war?

That either might open the way for a blood bath in South Vietnam?

That either could dim the prospects for a free choice by the South Vietnamese people?

Our power to influence the shape of post-war Vietnam seems limited to the way in which we decide to disengage. An abrupt and precipitate disengagement could leave chaos behind us.

To the extent that we can avoid that result, we should try.

A scheduled plan for withdrawal of American forces means that the United States will make its own decisions as a great country should—with an appreciation of its own interests, with understanding of its enemies and concern for its allies, and with the wisdom to learn from its past mistakes. In too many cases in Vietnam we have allowed ourselves to be diverted by narrow demands of the Saigon Government and deflected by the uncertain responses of Hanoi. We drifted with events and reacted to pressures. Now is the time for us to assert control over our own policies in pursuit of reasonable and just objectives.

Now is the time also to make clear to the Saigon government that we will not permit it to veto our efforts to explore new ways to end the war. Saigon blocked the proposed three-day cease fire at the time of Ho Chi Minh's death. We urged them to broaden their political base; they responded by enlarging the cabinet, but narrowing its political base.

It is not our prerogative to determine the future political complexion of the Saigon government, and we should not let it be assumed that we have any fixed or irrevocable views on that score.

There are additional steps which might enhance the prospects for a political settlement:

Agreement on a joint commission on elections, to avoid a "winner take all" election, feared by both sides.

Large-scale land reform.

A United States offer of medical aid, relief, and long-term economic and technical assistance to both Vietnams at the conclusion of a settlement.

These are steps for the Vietnamese to initiate, not for us to impose.

I do not assume that the suggestions I have made would guarantee immediate acceptance by the North Vietnamese and the National Liberation Front or by the Saigon government. But I believe that, taken together, they could provide incentives for both sides in Vietnam to begin planning for an end to the military contest.

Any of the proposals advanced for United States initiatives to disengage from Vietnam cannot be implemented by congressional resolution or by public demand. They can only be implemented by the President and his administration.

I believe President Nixon wants peace in Vietnam. I believe the Nation is ready to support him in meaningful moves toward peace. Such meaningful moves require new initiatives.

There have been, and will be, many different explanations of what this moratorium "means". Some will say it means that the American people want all our troops embarked this week for home, whatever the consequences. Some will say it means a complete repudiation of the administration's policies. The President's initial response to it seemed to support that second view—unwisely, in my opinion.

Let me tell you what I think this moratorium means.

I think it means that a very great number of Americans have decided that we should move much more vigorously than we have toward reducing our casualties, and toward ending the fighting and withdrawing from Vietnam.

The American people are in a position to encourage additional steps toward peace, by making known their commitment to a change in our strategies and a re-examination of our underlying international policies. That commitment will require an appreciation of the complexity of the forces with which we must deal, and a willingness to invest time and energy in the search for a better way to help the peoples of Asia, Africa and South America to achieve their own potential.

Our experience in Vietnam has taught us some painful lessons—lessons we wish we might have avoided or might have learned in a less painful way.

We are arrogant and mistaken if we believe that we of the western world are the sole possessors of the yearnings which motivated our own revolution. It is not our national responsibility or duty to stifle or pervert these yearnings when they appear elsewhere.

John Adams told us that, "power always thinks it has a great soul and vast views beyond the comprehension of the weak." Eric Sevareid reminds us that, "in that illusion lies the key to the ultimate crumbling of those sovereign states of the past that rolled not to, or toward, world supremacy. Power is not only not wisdom but often wisdom's enemy."

When we have truly learned that lesson and when it is reflected in our policies at home, this Nation will truly be on the road to the only kind of freedom that matters.