



CONGRESSMAN'S REPORT

MORRIS K. UDALL • 2d District of Arizona

House Office Building, Washington, D. C. 20515

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Preparing for Peace

The Lessons of the Sixties

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

--George Santayana
The Life of Reason

In introducing the members of his new cabinet to the nation President Nixon described them as men with an "extra dimension" of ability. Let's hope he was right, for that may be one of the few "extras" we have going for us in an increasingly threatening world.

A leader, whether he leads a company or a country, is unworthy of the name unless he attempts to look down the road and plan ahead. Today I am beginning a six-part series of newsletters on the decisions I see ahead for President Nixon, his cabinet, the Congress and the people of the United States. Over the next few weeks I want to share with you my concerns and ask you to share yours with me. I hope to follow the series with a questionnaire to all the residents of my district, touching on many of the issues covered. Out of this can come, I believe, the kind of responsible, informed decision-making that ought to be, but all too often isn't, a part of the democratic process.

AMERICA AT A TURNING POINT

In many ways this is a time of great opportunity. We have completed an important phase in our history; the great social programs that began with the New Deal -- from Social Security to Medicare -- have now been enacted. They're part of our social fabric, accepted by our people, by both major political parties. They're either long established and working -- take, for example, the Federal Housing Administration -- or they're getting under way and will gain from the support given them by what used to be the "opposition party." It is difficult to remember that just five years ago we were engaged in a bitter debate, a culmination of 15 years of debates, on whether there should even be a program of general aid to elementary and secondary education. That debate is over, and Federal aid to education is now, undoubtedly, a permanent part of our system, accepted by nearly everyone.

Voters these days tend to be more selective and independent, less likely to vote a straight party ticket, than in the past. I think we're going to see, as a result of this, a number of years in which political parties, as such, play a somewhat lesser role than they have in the past. For both Democrats and Republicans I see this as a period of rebuilding and realignment. But in any case I believe it will be possible for Republicans (who control the White House) and Democrats (who control the Congress) to work together on many things. And this may save us.

Most importantly, this will be a period of opportunity, I think, in that we have a new administration that is not tied to the policies and decisions of the past. President Nixon is starting with a large set of problems, to be sure, but the way he deals with them can be his own way. He has a war on his hands, he has tremendous domestic pressures, he has inflation, he has all sorts of people telling him to do this and do that, but for a brief moment in history he has considerable freedom to choose his own course and set his own policies. Within reason I expect this Democratic Congress will support him. But I believe the really tough decisions must be more than President Nixon's; they must be the decisions of the President *and* the Congress *and* the American people.

In his famous "House Divided" speech in 1858, Abraham Lincoln said, "If we could first know where we are, and wither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it." I think that kind of retrospection is very much in order right now.

A TIME FOR REAPPRAISAL

America is at a turning point, I believe. Its role in the world is sure to be different -- not in the sense that we are going to reject the past and withdraw, but in the sense that the world has changed in many ways and requires more of our attention, more of our capacity for problem-solving, and less of our indifference and arrogance.

This great country began with a surplus of everything -- land, water, minerals, forests and great open spaces. All of that has changed. The frontier is no more. Surpluses in these precious commodities no longer exist. Our margin for error in using them has disappeared.

The United States has been living on borrowed time in so many respects, and time now seems to be running out on us. It's startling to realize, for example, how much of the world's resources we have been consuming -- far more than our proportionate share and totally out of keeping with the population pressures now building. After all, if something doesn't change, the Earth will add another 3 billion people by the year 2000, and 6 billion more by 2040. The world has, indeed, changed, and we're going to be *forced* to deal with that change.

One small evidence of that change is the trouble we're having in this country today. With our own population over 200 million, and growing every year, we find all kinds of problems in our cities -- poverty, unemployment, seething discontent among underprivileged minorities. Our margin for error in dealing with these problems is about gone; we can't afford to make many mistakes, for the problems of the people in the cities are the problems of all of us. A society that makes it possible for a man to accumulate wealth and call it "mine" exists only because nearly all of its citizens are willing to obey its laws, to stop at red lights and go on green, to refrain from stealing and rock-throwing. We're at a point in our history, I believe, when the voices of the poor and the oppressed must be heard and their needs somehow met. If they aren't, society may be torn apart, and all of us will suffer the consequences.

Surely the most immediate and most threatening change, however, is in the world power structure -- that precarious and ever-changing balance of forces which has resulted in the nuclear arms race. And here is where President Nixon faces an extremely critical test. Even as I write these words I understand he is wrestling with his first decision in this area; it may even have been announced by the time this report comes off the press. I fervently hope he makes the right decisions on our arms policy, for if he doesn't, he may find the huge mistakes of the Johnson Administration small by comparison.

LEARNING FROM OUR MISTAKES

Surely the events of the past few years ought to provide our government and our people with some powerful lessons. With characteristic American impatience we blundered into a costly war which I believe we will never "win" in a military sense. In my judgment we fooled ourselves into believing we could wage such a war without creating problems at home. I think history will show that our government wasn't really open with its own people in reaching major decisions of vital importance to them.

As you know from my previous writings, I occasionally engage in hindsight. I must be honest and acknowledge that I gave qualified support to the Vietnam War in the early stages, even though I now believe it was a grievous mistake. But mistakes need not be our undoing if we have the capacity to learn from them.

Here are a few lessons I hope we have learned as a result of our Vietnam experience:

** Even a great nation like the United States ought to be willing to admit when it has made a mistake and to alter its course accordingly. It is clearly wrong, in my judgment, to continue making decisions based on the faulty reasoning that one's "course is already set."

We should not hesitate to make hard-boiled reviews from time to time and to abandon any course we find can no longer be justified.

** The United States should know by now it has not been ordained as the world's policeman, charged with the duty to defend any nation purporting to be "free" (i.e., non-communist), no matter how undemocratic and corrupt it may be.

** We ought not, ever again, to get involved in any struggle which is basically a civil war between contending elements in a single country.

** We should know by now that modern armies, with all their sophisticated equipment, are a poor match for peasant guerillas in sandals if those guerillas think they have something to fight for. If a government in an undeveloped country is honest and really responsive to and representative of its people, it won't need American armies to sustain it; if it is corrupt or unresponsive to its people, no amount of American military power can save it for long.

** In general, we should intervene or commit our forces only when our vital national interest is clearly at stake, and then only -- except for the most unusual and extreme reasons -- under international auspices such as the United Nations.

** Never again should we back into a war, by sole decision of the Executive, as we did in Vietnam. Congress must reassert its power to decide whether this nation shall, or *shall not*, go to war. We should be done with tricky, *undeclared* wars.

** We should never again fool ourselves, or be fooled into believing, that we can have both guns and butter for the price of butter alone. We must be prepared to pay in higher taxes the costs of any military adventures abroad. We surely know now that to do otherwise means that we shall pay later in inflation.

** In a world as treacherous as this we should always remember that any major action on our part will prompt a counter action from the "other side" -- whatever that might be. In Vietnam we seemed to assume that every escalation on our part would be allowed to stand without a comparable escalation on the part of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong. We were wrong every time. We will continue to be wrong if we apply this kind of thinking in the arms race.

WHEN THE WAR ENDS

I believe that in the next 12 months we will, somehow, grope our way to an end, or beginning of an end, in Vietnam. Finding a solution is certainly President Nixon's highest priority. And when the war does end, we're going to have some interesting things to talk about.

The war's end is going to present President Nixon and the country with a great opportunity to shift a big piece of the Federal budget from military to domestic spending. That is, if the President and the Congress aren't misled by those military men, Defense contractors and others who contend, and perhaps sincerely believe, that we must pour most, if not all, of that money into new military programs.

In my judgment, the use we make of this extra money -- what the economists call "budgetary elbow room" -- will be *the* test of the new presidency. With the right decision this country may be able to solve many of its problems in time to avert catastrophe; with the wrong one we may find ourselves going down the road to another Vietnam -- or worse.

How much money will be available when the war ends? At present we're spending about \$83 billion on Defense, \$30 billion on the war itself. One might expect that the military could return to its pre-War level of about \$50 billion, but this will never happen. Demands for some new programs and replacing of worn-out equipment will absorb at least a portion of that amount -- say \$10 billion for a starter. Termination of the surtax, probably next year, will reduce the pie even further. But growth of our economy will more than offset this. The best guesses at the moment are that, with conclusion of the war, this nation will be able to pick up about \$10 billion of "elbow room" in the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1970, and perhaps \$20 billion the following year.

The question is: *How are we going to spend that extra money?*

DOMESTIC POSSIBILITIES

If President Nixon decides to invest this surplus in domestic programs, and if Congress agrees, here are some of our options:

1 -- We could beef up programs like general aid to education, the war on poverty (perhaps reworked some way but aimed at the same target) and Model Cities -- all programs started during the Johnson Administration but left starving for funds because of the Vietnam war.

2 -- We could share Federal revenues with the states, as Governor Rockefeller of New York has urged, letting them solve many problems at the local level.

3 -- We could set up some program, like a "guaranteed annual wage," which would seek to raise the incomes of the poor directly and perhaps reduce or eliminate other forms of poverty effort.

4 -- We could reduce the national debt.

5 -- We could reduce taxes, giving the taxpayers a big boost but doing nothing additional about the problems in our midst.

Whether any of these choices will be available rests on decisions now being debated in the innermost circles of government (such as the National Security Council). Those decisions relate to a possible new arms race.

OVERKILL REVISITED

For several years both the United States and the Soviet Union have known that each had the capacity to destroy much of the other country's population at will, even if the other country struck first. We could kill 150 million Russians any day of the week, and any hour of the day. They could kill the same number of Americans any time they chose to do so. That situation hasn't changed, except for the worse. Our country now has 1710 intercontinental ballistic missiles (including many with several warheads capable of being directed to as many different targets simultaneously) and 646 intercontinental bombers capable of delivering another 2500 nuclear warheads to the Soviet Union (or any other enemy). The Soviet Union has about 980 ICBMs (probably none of them with multiple warheads) and 150 intercontinental bombers.

One might think this was a fairly good balance for the United States. With many of our missiles either in "hardened" sites (which presumably can sustain anything but a direct hit) or at sea (where they can't be found) we have what the scientists call an "assured destruction capability." *And so do the Russians.* By this is meant that, even after an all-out attack, each nation has the capacity of inflicting "unacceptable" damage on the other nation in retaliation. And the knowledge of this certain destruction of one's own nation is the strongest possible assurance that a first attack will not be made on the other nation.

Surprisingly, the world has enjoyed a period of relative stability and calm since the first big missile race of the late 50s and early 60s. If anything, the existence of all those terrible weapons has served to hold down the sabre-rattling of both parties, most notably during the Middle East crisis of June, 1967, when our two countries might well have stumbled into a major war. I also think this was a big

factor in Premier Khrushchev's decision to pull his missiles out of Cuba in 1962; the risk of nuclear war was too great, once the issue was joined.

Now, however, new things are stirring. The Soviets, for one reason or another, resumed missile construction in 1967, bringing them up from 720 to 900 ICBMs. They also built a small anti-ballistic-missile system around Moscow and what our military men *thought* was an ABM system near Tallinn, Estonia (but which they now believe to be a conventional anti-aircraft system). In response to these moves we have resumed missile-building, too, and we are now on the brink of a decision to deploy a vast ABM system of our own -- either a "thin" system costing \$5-10 billion or a "thick" system costing \$50 billion or more, with another \$50 billion invested in fallout shelters to protect American citizens from fallout generated by their own *defensive* missiles.

How high the cost of a "thick" system might go was indicated the other day by Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri, first Secretary of the Air Force. He had the Brookings Institution do a study, and its conclusion was that such a system would cost, not \$50 billion, but as much as \$400 billion -- more than the entire national debt.

Is all this arms-building necessary? How much of the pressure for new missiles is coming from the Defense contractors who would build them? How much does anyone know about the new rounds of *offensive* and *defensive* arms build-up which will follow, as the night the day, once these steps are taken? These are questions I will explore in my [next report](#).

CAN A DEMOCRACY BE RATIONAL?

The decision to escalate Vietnam from a modest "advisory" effort involving 17,000 men to a major war effort involving 550,000 men was not a national decision, reached by the American people after careful advance debate. If such a debate had been held, would we have reached the same decision?

I said in the beginning of this report that I hoped the result of this reappraisal might be the kind of responsible and informed decision-making that all-too-often *doesn't* occur in our democratic process. Yet I feel this is one time when the people of this country must be informed, must play a part in whatever decisions are made, and must contribute, not just to popular, but to *rational* decision-making. For the Achilles heel of democracy is the failure of many citizens to know what is going on and to use their voices and their votes to

bring about the kind of country and kind of world that is consistent with their own long-range, vital interests.

I believe that we *can* solve our domestic problems and that we *can* avert nuclear holocaust. But it's not going to be easy. And those charged with responsibilities in the next few years are going to need all the help and guidance the people of this country can give them.

I believe a democratic government, however complicated by demands from many sides, can be rational and, what is more, can do a better job of solving its problems than any other kind of system. But our margin for error has all but disappeared in most areas, and we're *really* going to be put to the test in the years to come.

In the remainder of this series I will explore some of the decisions that lie ahead as this great country of ours prepares for peace. My succeeding newsletters will deal with the arms race, domestic programs, the problem of inflation, the need for tax reforms and, finally, the increasingly serious problem of population growth.

As we go along, I'll appreciate your comments.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marvin Seiden".