

Sp file. Feb 1 - Vol 3
Foreign Wars

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Excerpts from Remarks
by
Senator Hubert H. Humphrey

Veterans of Foreign Wars Address
February 1, 1959
Washington, D.C.

I am always pleased to work with the Veterans of Foreign Wars in their legislative program. This year, as you know, I am one of the sponsors of the resolution to set up a separate Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, as I have been in years past.

This is a tough one. If we can break through on this one, there will be a far greater chance that veterans legislation will receive the careful and thorough consideration it deserves. But there is much work to be done. I don't want to be encouraging that we are going to get action on this resolution this session.

At the same time, let us not be discouraged.

I remember very well two years ago that Bob Hansen, here, came to talk to me about both the Veterans Affairs Committee and the VFW's long effort to pass a Loyalty Day Resolution. I told him not to be discouraged, and to keep working. Last year he became the National Loyalty Day Chairman and worked again like a trojan on the Loyalty Day Resolution. Finally, he came to me and said that he thought he had exhausted every possibility of getting that resolution moved out of the Judiciary Committee, and it looked as though another year was going to be added in the long string of defeats. Bob was very persuasive.

I talked to Senator Eastland, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee and I said to him: "Jim, some of my friends in Minnesota are very insistent about this resolution and they have persuaded me. I would surely appreciate whatever you could do to move that resolution out of Committee."

Senator Eastland said to me: "Hubert, if you want something that badly, you are going to get it. We will move the resolution."

And he did.

It just goes to show that hard work, persistence and leadership eventually pay off!

It is going to pay off in the field of national defense, too!

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The Veterans of Foreign Wars is rightly supporting strong reserve forces, strong conventional forces for meeting the threat of limited war, a strong Marine Corps, and an active carrier building program. I support these objectives wholeheartedly -- and this despite the fact that I feel we should be pressing in every way we can to persuade the Soviet Union to agree to a workable, enforceable disarmament agreement.

I don't believe in this one-way disarmament -- disarmament by the Bureau of the Budget.

I don't believe in cutting back our own forces while the Soviet Union expands its military and naval forces.

I have been conducting hearings during this past week, and I will be chairing those hearings right up into March. We are trying to get a clear understanding of whether there is any relationship between the strategic and tactical planning of the Pentagon, the planning of the Atomic Energy Commission, and the planning of the State Department.

I am more and more convinced that our Armed Forces are neither adequate enough in size nor sufficiently flexible to back up all of the many far-flung commitments we have made to our friends and allies throughout the world. It does no good at all to make a commitment that you cannot back up.

Foreign policy and defense policy must be completely and intimately related.

Even more important, of course, is the necessity to understand that our nation is in the midst of a struggle which goes far beyond armaments and weapons. We are in a competition that is a struggle of society against society, in which the whole industrial and social and economic complex of the Soviet nations are geared into one effort -- to surpass us, to isolate us, to make us impotent in the world of the twentieth century.

Now, I do not mind this kind of competition. Competition is stimulating. If we can, by maintaining our military strength,

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force the competition into peaceful channels, I think, with imaginative and dynamic leadership, we need have no fear of what the Soviet nations can do.

Our military strength is a necessary shield. If we drop the shield, we invite disaster.

But if we do nothing more than hold the shield in front of us, we would be like a man who thinks he stands on a rock, when in reality he stands on quicksand. We can disappear from history, sinking into the sands of a world of tremendous, seething, economic and social change.

We must understand this world of ours -- this rapidly shifting and changing world of new nations and new ideas.

And we must understand the mind, purpose, and strategy of our adversaries -- the calculating and tough and shrewd men who lead the Soviet world.

People have asked me, Why I went to the Soviet Union. I will tell you why. I think we have to know these people. I think we have to try to understand them. I think we have to find out what makes them tick. In fact, we have to be doing a lot more than simply ~~bringing~~ isolated individuals over to the United States. We ought to have a Soviet information center which, if it did nothing more than study the details of the lives of the top 100 men in the Soviet Government, would be worth expenditure ~~in~~ of many millions of dollars.

I think we should not only find out about these people and their society -- but I think we ought to have the courage to go into their country and to ~~tell~~ them what we think and where we stand.

Frankly, it takes a lot more guts to sit down across from that tough and calculating man in the Kremlin and look him straight in the eye and tell him where you think the Soviet Union is wrong, ~~that~~ ^{if you} it does to get up on the floor of the Senate and denounce the Communists with all of your own guards and policemen around.

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I think we need a lot more courage and hard work and dedication to win the struggle in which we are engaged.

We can do it and we will do it.

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