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ADDRESS BY
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THE NEED TO KNOW

To be cited as a person who has, in your opinion, done a commendable job to stimulate discussion and thought on current public issues is indeed a great honor. It is the more so because it is presented by a group which has so much experience and talent in the art of public discussion and debate.

I am placed in the position of having earned a reputation which I must continue to deserve. It is therefore fitting that I use the occasion to speak briefly on the importance of discussion and debate, and on the essentiality of having the necessary information on those subjects chosen for discussion.

Debate Essential to the Democratic Process

It is axiomatic that without lively discussion of current public issues, our political system -- with its inestimable democratic process -- would not survive. It would atrophy through lack of an essential ingredient in its diet, public discussion and debate. Public debate and discussion provide our citizens with the knowledge that they must have to judge the merit of the many issues which confront our government, and without the discussants, the public would often be left with little or no opportunity to know how to choose public servants--how to choose those who best represent their views as to how the country should be managed.

Public debate and discussion, although imperative if our society is to survive and retain its vitality, must also have substance. If debate and discussion mean an exchange of ignorance, then certainly our people will be fooled into approving policies, and our legislators will be misled into passing laws, which are wrong from the standpoint of our national security and the well-being of our citizens.

On domestic matters, reliable information can and does emanate from a variety of sources. Our universities, our research institutions, our inquiring press, and the lay but well-informed voter all make priceless contributions, in addition to the government itself to the evaluation of proposed solutions to problems facing the body politic.

On the foreign front, however, our store of reliable information is sometimes more limited.

I do not mean that private institutions and private citizens do not and can not make a contribution in the field of foreign policy. They can and they must. But on certain aspects of our national security, the information that is necessary to have before making decisions and rendering judgments is contained within the Executive branch of our government.

Let me cite an example which is very familiar to you, the problem of controlling and reducing armaments, and particularly the question of the prohibition of the further development of nuclear weapons.

You have been debating this question for the past several months. In order to prepare your cases, you had to have information. Without knowing what your various sources were, I am willing to bet that many, if not most, came from hearings and studies held and conducted by our Senate Subcommittee on Disarmament. Or, if they did not come directly from the Subcommittee, many of your sources were stimulated as a result of the Subcommittee's work.

Lack of Information on the Detection of Nuclear Tests

Last year it took us literally months to find people in the Executive branch of the government who were willing and prepared to discuss the problem of the detection of nuclear weapons tests. Once we had some knowledge of what was involved in the detection problem, we could go outside the government for additional views. But basically, we had to start with information that only the Executive branch of the government could supply. Until the government agencies involved could be persuaded to release more information, intelligent discussion of the control and inspection aspect of prohibiting nuclear weapons production and stopping nuclear weapons tests could not progress.

But there is still a great deal of information that is classified on this matter, some of it for reasons that are difficult to understand.

The Disarmament Subcommittee has been holding hearings the past couple of weeks on many aspects of the disarmament question. Many of these hearings, the Subcommittee felt required to hold in Executive session. The reason for this was only so that the Executive officers could speak frankly before the Subcommittee. An Executive session means that no witness can refuse to speak or discuss a matter on grounds that the matter is classified. However, the Subcommittee requested each witness to go over his testimony carefully so that the maximum portion of it could be made public, and thus contribute to the public's understanding of the issues involved.

Continued Government Classification of Arms Control Data

Getting information that has been presented in Executive session released to the public is a frustrating and time-consuming job. And as I said previously, much information still cannot be released for a variety of reasons, some of them not very defensible.

Let me give you some examples, all of which have come out of my recent experiences with the Disarmament Subcommittee hearings. You will immediately see, I think, that the withholding of some of the information is justified, that the withholding of some of the information is questionable, and that the refusal to disclose still other information borders on the ridiculous.

Questionable withholding of Information-Weapons Information

Case No. 1. Information relating to the weight of atomic weapons relative to their yield is classified. This, I think you will agree, is clearly sensitive. I have no quarrel with this type of classification.

Disagreement Among Executive Agencies

Case No. 2. A private witness who has been serving the government in a specific capacity makes recommendations to the Executive branch regarding future policies on the relationship of disarmament matters to the prevention of surprise attack. These recommendations are agreed to by one agency, but may be opposed by another agency and, therefore, the recommendations are classified.

This case I would call questionable.

It is understandable that the Executive branch prefers to coordinate policy and reach agreement with all agencies concerned before a given policy is stated to the public. But such an attitude assumes that the public should not be privy to the formulation of policy, that the public should only know of policy after it has been set and determined.

It is reasonable to wait for policies to be coordinated among the various agencies of the government IF eventually a decision is made which the public can then discuss and debate. But what we are witnessing today is a government in which decisions are not being made, because there is no leadership at the top to resolve the differences of opinion among the various Executive agencies.

I am aware that this is somewhat a partisan remark.

I would be dishonest, however, if I tried to gloss over this problem. I can understand that the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the Atomic Energy Commission as well as other agencies in the government have different views on such a question as to whether the United States should attempt to negotiate with the Soviet Union on questions of armaments control.

These differences of opinion are legitimate.

But if our government is to be a positive force in this world, if our national security is to be preserved, if we are to earn the respect and confidence of the peoples of other nations, and if we are to know what kind of policies we should follow in dealing with the Soviet Union and other countries of the Soviet bloc, THEN these differences of opinion must be resolved. And they must be resolved within a reasonable period of time.

So I say that a witness' personal recommendations may be legitimately withheld from the public for a time, but if weeks go by and nothing happens, then it is time for the public and its representatives in Congress to begin to ask questions, and to apply pressure to have these matters brought before the public for debate.

Seismological Research

Case No. 3. Scientific research is now going on regarding the study of the earth, how to distinguish earthquakes from nuclear explosions, and how to perfect instruments to identify earthquakes and explosions. This research is still classified. I fail to comprehend why the nature of the research is withheld. The research does not deal with weapons; it deals with seismology. We are told that if instruments are placed deep in the earth, this may be an excellent means of detecting and identifying nuclear explosions and earthquakes. But you cannot be told how the experiments will be conducted, where they will be conducted, who is responsible for carrying on the research, and when it is expected to be completed. Yet, the experiments would have great interest for seismologists the world over, and even more important at this particular time, the results could have a significant impact on negotiations now underway in Geneva for a controlled suspension of nuclear weapons tests.

Case of Executive Privilege

Case No. 4. Certain portions of testimony are deleted on the ground that the witness is a consultant to an advisory body to the President and, therefore, the information should not be given out. Not only is it contended that this is privileged information, but it is contended that since the testimony of the witness may conflict with the views of another Executive agency, that this matter should be left to be ironed out within the Executive branch of the government.

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What this amounts to is that a regular Executive department can air its views in public, even if these views conflict with public policy, but a consultant to a Presidential advisory body cannot make some of his views public, even if they agree with the policy. Now this is a strange situation. Let me be a little more explicit.

The stated policy of the government at the moment is that we shall try to reach agreement with the Soviet Union on the discontinuance of nuclear weapons tests provided an effective control and inspection system is included in the agreement.

The Department of Defense and the Atomic Energy Commission question the advisability of this policy, and say so publicly.

However, all the private evidence is that the President's Science Advisory Committee, headed by Dr. James R. Killian, formerly head of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, approves the policy.

Yet neither Killian nor any of the members of the Committee can publicly say they agree with the policy if their statements imply they are speaking as a member of the Committee.

So what we have is a policy, the defenders of which are gagged and those who oppose it have a relatively free hand in expressing their opposition.

All I can say is that this is a rather peculiar way to run a government.

One might even ask, what about the fellow on top? What does he think about all this? Why won't he speak out so that we might know just how firm the policy is?

Before I leave this point, I wish to stress I do not disagree with the right of the President to have advisers who have a confidential role. But this prerogative can be carried too far, so far that whole segments of informed opinion are constantly being bottled up. They are stored away and saved for the infighting of the Executive branch but the benefit of their views and wisdom are hidden from the public.

Dr. Killian and his Science Advisory Committee is not the only group which has been sheltered from Congressional and public inquiry. When Mr. Stassen was disarmament adviser to the President, all of his work and studies conducted for him were classified under the label of Executive privilege.

When Clarence Randall was the President's adviser on foreign trade, he was prohibited from testifying before Congress because of his role as Presidential adviser.

Nelson Rockefeller, when he was advising the President on matters of psychological warfare, could not tell the public what his views were and that they were not being accepted.

William Foster an able and as conscientious a public servant as one can find, served as vice-chairman of the famous Gaither Report on our national defense. The Gaither Report was completely classified, even from members of Congress. Mr. Foster, it is reported, felt so strongly about his views that he wrote a book, but even this was labeled secret by the White House. Mr. Foster is a patient man, far more than I would be under such circumstances.

Validity of Soviet Positions

Case No. 5. Another type of information that the government classified in our recent hearings has to do with the validity of arguments presented by the Soviet Union. A government witness in the course of his testimony suggested that the Soviet Union possibly had a valid objection to one of our arguments, but the Executive branch decided this ought to be censored.

Now, there is considerable merit in not conceding too many points to your opponent in the course of a debate or in the course of delicate negotiations. On the other hand, if the American people are constantly fed the line that every Soviet proposal is by definition full of evil for us or that every Soviet fear is a trumped up Communist plot, then how shall we ever judge the genuine points of view of that nation and its people?

I am not suggesting here that the Soviet Union is a country to be trusted.

I am suggesting that occasionally the Soviet leaders have made arguments that are legitimate from its security interests, and that it is to the interests of the American people to be aware of what those points of view are. I think we should be grown up enough to allow witnesses to release remarks which indicate that a particular Soviet position has some merit, and ought to be studied and given some consideration.

I have labored long on this point of the classification of information by the Executive branch of the government. I have done so first because I am talking to a group that appreciates the importance of having adequate information on public issues, and secondly, because I hope that more and more of our citizens will demand that such information be released so that they can participate in the discussion of what policies our government should pursue in meeting the challenges of today's world.

Direction of American Foreign and Defense Policies

Perhaps one of the reasons that so much information is classified by our government is that those at the top are uncertain as to the direction our foreign policy should take.

Perhaps some of us are clinging to principles announced in the past but have neglected their meaning and implementation in light of today's events and problems. Let me illustrate what I mean.

Since about the time of the Korean War, in 1950, our foreign policy took the form of building national defense so that when the time came, we could negotiate from a position of strength. This was the theme, adopted in the late forties or early fifties, and carried on until the present.

I have no objection to this principle -- negotiating from positions of strength. In fact, I would say that the principle is a fundamental prerequisite to any kind of negotiation.

But I doubt that we have followed and abided by this concept. We have allowed certain aspects of our national defense to be weakened considerably, and we have forgotten that we wanted to achieve positions of strength so that we could engage in meaningful negotiations.

On the one hand, we have acted as though we could engage in some unilateral disarmament at home, directed by the Bureau of the Budget and motivated by a desire to save money at the expense of national security.

And on the other hand, we have forgotten that the positions of strength we wanted to build were to be used as the basis for serious bargaining and negotiation.

We have spent billions and billions of dollars for weapons of destruction and annihilation.

We have put most of our knowledge and efforts in the nuclear weapons field -- into weapons of the very large yield.

We have had to make weapons of very large yield as warheads for our missiles because the range of accuracy of our missiles was sufficiently poor that only a weapon of very large yield could obliterate and destroy its designated target.

By comparison, we are spending nothing on problems of arms control.

We are spending very little on the problem of defense against probing actions of the Soviet Union, and on the problem of limited military conflicts.

We have also used the vast majority of our foreign aid expenditures to supply other countries with military hardware.

We have joined with as many nations as we could in signing military defense pacts.

We have responded to an increasing degree to the problem of competition from foreign markets by establishing import quotas and raising tariffs. We have accumulated large amounts of foreign currencies through the sale of surplus agricultural products, currencies which now sit idle and which day by day depreciate in value and are not used for productive projects.

These are some of the things we are doing in the field of defense and foreign policy. I submit that the direction of this approach is wrong, misguided, and lacking in vision and creative leadership.

Positions of Military, Political, Economic Strength Lacking

The direction of our policies is not making for positions of strength. They are going in the direction of retrenchment.

Too often we appear to be saying that we, the richest nation the world has ever known, cannot afford to spend the money to have a balanced defense establishment. Too frequently we give the impression that we dare not sit down at the bargaining table with the Soviet Union because our representatives cannot bargain as effectively as the Soviets.

Too many times do we seem to be saying that the great American market cannot take the competition of foreign made goods.

And, finally, too often does our answer to the problem of need abroad seem to be in terms of military equipment -- and not enough in terms of the implements for economic well being and the expansion of opportunities for human growth and happiness.

But I do not propose to dwell on the inadequacies of our policies. It is more important to stress that we should be doing, what we can be working for as citizens of a free government and a rich and prosperous society.

PROGRAM FOR THE FUTURE

1. We need to have a much more balanced defense establishment than we now have. The threats to security and peace today exist in such areas as the island of freedom of Berlin, Communist subversion and infiltration in the Middle East, and probing actions along the periphery of Asia. If we do not have the know-how, the fortitude, and the equipment to face these situations, then the Soviet bloc will gradually nibble away the free world, bit by bit.

2. We must engage in serious study and preparation for the purpose of bargaining with the Soviet Union on all areas -- exchange of persons, joint participation of international health activities, solution of the division of Europe, trade in goods, and the control of armaments. We should not be fearful of negotiating, but whenever we negotiate we should know what we are after, and we must be well prepared and select the best of negotiators to represent us. In none of these areas should we expect quick results.

3. We should focus more on the potential of the economic and political power of the newly developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In this power-conscious world we have tended to look primarily where power is today and not enough where power may be tomorrow. As part of Western civilization it is natural that we have looked mainly to Europe for support and advice and as the area in which to invest our capital. I would not for one minute diminish the degree of cooperation we have achieved with the countries of Western Europe. But I would place much more stress on working with the countries of the Latin, Asian, and African worlds.

4. The direction of our foreign economic policy should be one of expansion, not one of caution and retrenchment. As we have grown rich and wealthy in our economic system, we have lost to some extent the spirit of competition and the spirit of risk in conducting our economic affairs. If we are to promote and extend ideas of a free economy, I believe we must look outward, not inward. But we cannot expand and strengthen international trade and international economic development without meeting some competition from abroad and without subjecting our capital to some risk.

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The focus of our cultural policy should be one of opening up our shores for the people of all nations to observe the operation of our political, economic, and social system.

We know there are many aspects of our way of life that require vast improvement. But what is and can be exciting and challenging about our free society is that if we have the vision, the will, and the leadership, the sores and the defects can be removed.

Our society is constantly changing, and it is the art of statesmanship and politics to have this change be for the good—and not the bad.

I could go on at considerable length elaborating on these points and adding more.

But on all these matters, much more public discussion and debate are needed.

You have done a masterful job in weighing the pros and cons and the various courses of action on one of the crucial issues that face us, that of the direction of our arms control program and policies.

I cannot help but have the feeling that whatever views you come out with on this issue, the country will be better served as a result.

I am pleased to have had a small part in your deliberations today, and I can only hope that through the deliberations of you and your fellow students, United States policy will evolve to serve the nation in the cause of a better and more peaceful future for all of us.



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