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REMARKS

THE HONORABLE HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

- what are
you going to
take

PACE COLLEGE
NEW YORK CITY
APRIL 28, 1969

Dec 19 -
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For the first time in two decades, the Congress of the
United States is showing signs this year of seriously
questioning the priorities which the Executive branch has
set in our federal budget.

Dr. Mortola

This is a tremendously important development since the
priorities we establish in the federal budget, this year, will
likely commit this nation for the foreseeable future to either
one of two paths:

Will we choose the admittedly difficult and often frustrating
path leading to a deceleration of the strategic arms spiral with

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a corresponding acceleration of our efforts to attack the root causes of deprivation and unrest in this country?

Or will we follow the far easier path, at least in the short run, of acceding to the backlogged requests of the military for an entirely new generation of offensive and defensive strategic weapons and thereby mortgage our chances of mobilizing a far greater proportion of America's resources in the cause of humanity, both at home and abroad?

↳ This is the fundamental decision now facing the Congress and the country -- and this is a decision which should command the attention of every citizen concerned about the survival of democratic government in these turbulent times.

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A little more than a year ago the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders -- the Kerner Commission -- released its historic report and recommendations. On the first anniversary of this report, Urban America and The Urban Coalition released a study, One Year Later, which evaluated our progress to date in meeting the goals of the Kerner Commission.

This appraisal stated that:

"--Poverty remains a pervasive fact of life ... and the continuing disparity between this poverty and the general affluence remains a source of alienation and discontent.

"--Ghetto schools continue to fail. The small amount of progress that has been made has been counterbalanced by a growing atmosphere of hostility and conflict in many cities.

"--At present, there are no programs that seriously threaten the continued existence of the slums."

And as the Kerner report had warned a year earlier, the study concluded: "For a year later, we are a year closer to being two societies, black and white, increasingly separate and scarcely less equal."

I was distressed at the meager attention given this important evaluation when it was released six weeks ago. For this report outlined, as did the Kerner Commission before it, the specific actions which must now be taken in America to reverse this alarming pattern of social disintegration.

Then too,

We must understand the dimensions of our basic challenge:

to achieve not only equity in opportunity but equity in results.

And equity in results refers to very concrete goals -- the right to a job at decent pay, the right to an adequate income if one cannot work, the right to an education which releases rather than destroys human creativity, the right to decent housing in safe neighborhoods, the right to good health care and sufficient nutrition.

These are goals worthy of a compassionate and great nation...and these goals are attainable if we start putting first things first.

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Yes, we stand at a critical moment in the history of the United States -- a moment when the right decisions taken forcefully and courageously can dramatically alter the priorities of our national life.

∟ The opening skirmish in this battle over national priorities will be fought in Congress over money for the initial deployment of the Safeguard anti-ballistic missile system. ∟ But this debate is only symptomatic of the more fundamental decisions that must be reached in the coming year over military spending. ∟

This is why negotiations with the Soviet Union over the reduction of offensive and defensive strategic weapons are so critical.

- (1) what are our Commitments
- (2) what contingencies does plan on
- (3) what forces needed
- (4) what weapons needed

If we can freeze the strategic weapons race at its present levels, and then begin the process of mutual phased reductions of the nuclear arsenals, there is a chance of winning the battle of priorities...there is a chance that we can indeed begin putting first things first.

* * * *

↳ The accumulated wrongs and deprivations of generations cannot be swept away overnight. But this obvious fact must not become an excuse for making anything less than the maximum effort to do as much as we can -- now.

↳ We hear a lot these days about not promising more than we can deliver -- about not raising peoples' expectations over society's capacity to remedy long-standing injustices. ↳ All of this is wise and prudent talk...up to a point.

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--Up to the point of permitting such sentiments to become rationalizations for doing less than the absolute maximum of what we are capable of doing.

--Up to the point that this approach suggests to the American people that these terribly urgent and difficult problems can be solved without considerable sacrifice and commitment on their part.

--And up to the point that we believe our basic error has been in saying to the American people that all should share equitably in the wealth and opportunity of this nation... and forgetting that, ^{real} ~~in fact~~, our basic error has been the protracted failure to mobilize the resources and energies of this country to reach this goal.

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Let's face one fact squarely: television and advertising will do the job of raising peoples' expectations, regardless of what the government may do or what our political leaders may say.

But it is the special responsibility of government and our political leadership to make the decisions and generate the support and confidence that will get this job done.

On the basis of the Administration's reductions of the Federal budget in critical domestic areas, -- cities, education, health care, the Job Corps and the poverty program -- I can only conclude that they fail to grasp the urgency of our present circumstances...and that they are profoundly mistaken in believing that gradualism and patience are sufficient in these days of crisis.

To illustrate: President Nixon recently announced reductions in the Federal budget of some four billion dollars -- approximately three billion from domestic programs and one billion from military spending.

I am enough of a political realist to recognize that some budget cuts were probably necessary, especially if the President hoped to win Congressional support for the extension of the income tax surcharge.

But I am deeply disappointed that seventy-five percent of this cut came out of domestic programs and only twenty-five percent from the military.

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Last year President Johnson followed a distinctly different course. Forced by the Congress to accept a six billion dollar reduction in Federal expenditures, the President apportioned the cuts equally -- three billion from domestic agencies and three billion from the Department of Defense.

In my opinion, the Nixon Administration was in serious error this year by extracting such a significant proportion of the reductions from domestic programs already critically short of urgently needed resources.

* * * *

One thing is certain: the process of shifting significant sums of Federal money from works of war to works of peace will not be easy.

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Every positive advance in nuclear arms control has been opposed by powerful members of Congress and segments of the military and defense establishment. Any meaningful agreements reached with the Soviets concerning the freezing or reduction of our strategic weapons will almost certainly be fought once again.

But unless this battle is won, the outcome of subsequent encounters to secure additional resources for cities, for education, for health care, for jobs and housing, and related activities will be largely decided -- in the negative -- even before the issues get to Congress.

h Our military budgets will continue to expand; our domestic allocations will become proportionately smaller.

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We now have the chance to reverse this traditional pattern if we focus our efforts on ending the insanity of the strategic nuclear arms race, while we begin simultaneously the difficult job of securing these resources for urgent domestic needs.

There is no more important business that will come before the Congress or the American people this year.

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