

## 24 Remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast. February 1, 1973

*Mr. Speaker, Chairman Quie, Dr. Burns and all of our very distinguished guests from all over the world and our very distinguished guests from the United States of America:*

I first have a bit of what I think is good news and encouraging news. A message was handed to me just as the breakfast was beginning from Senator Stennis' physician, General Moncrief. He reports that the Senator says he feels well this morning, and this morning, when the doctor said he was going to the Prayer Breakfast, Senator Stennis, who because he has some tubes in his mouth could not talk, but he wrote on his pad, "I wish I were going, too."

If Senator Stennis is listening, as I am sure he is on radio, or maybe he will hear it on television tonight, he is here today, he is with us, and we are with him and he is going to be back. That is what we all know, and that is what we pray for.

As I heard the other speakers, I thought of that first prayer breakfast, the National

Prayer Breakfast, which was held, as I recall, in the Mayflower Hotel in 1953. President Eisenhower addressed it on that occasion. I think Billy Graham did. And it was a memorable occasion.

I think back to the 4 years that I have had the privilege to be here as a guest and also of the years before even 1953, when I met with, first, the House Prayer Breakfast group and, then, the Senate Prayer Breakfast group.

I think, too, of what has happened over these 4 years, and I think all of us perhaps will remember what a year we have just completed. Since we last met here, just one year ago, we have made the trip to the People's Republic of China, which opened communication with one-fourth of the people who live on this globe, where there had previously been virtually no communication whatever as far as we were concerned.

We made the trip to the Soviet Union, to Moscow, and with the Ambassador from the Soviet Union here, and the

mayor from Moscow here, we all realize that that trip had enormous significance in terms of the future of the world in which we live because it was really the first time that two very great powers sat down together, recognized their differences and also those areas where they could work together, and made agreements, agreements to work together in certain peaceful enterprises and to limit armaments in other enterprises. And so, a beginning was made, a very important beginning that needed to be made. That happened this year.

And then finally, and reference has already been made to this, for the first time in 10 years at one of these prayer breakfasts, the President of the United States is able to say the United States is at peace in Vietnam.

Could I put that peace in perspective? I refer to these journeys abroad and also the agreement that has just been reached. We could read too much into the peace that we have talked about, much as we would hope that it could mean everything that we could possibly imagine.

But as we look over the history of agreements between nations and as we look at those periods of peace that follow war, the record is not too encouraging. Because what we often find is that after war and after a period in which a nation has peace, the conflict that we were engaged in in war tends to turn itself inward and we continue to engage in that conflict in peace. And rather than a period of peace being one that is creative and positive, it is one that is negative, one of withdrawal, one of isolation, and that plants the seeds for more conflict, not only at home but abroad.

This is the record too often in the past. We must not let it happen now.

I recall, for example, in 1969 right after I had been elected for the first time, a trip to Europe. We had some problems on our campuses at that time, as you may remember. And when I visited one of the European heads of state which had had no war for 25 years—and we had had two, one in Korea, and we were then involved in one in Vietnam—we talked long into the night about the problems of our young people, his and ours.

And he made a very profound comment. He said, "The problem with your young people is war." He said, "The problem with our young people is peace."

We must not let that happen. For our young people and for this Nation, we must recognize that peace is not something that is simply the absence of war, it is an opportunity to do great things—great things for our people at home, great things for people abroad.

I think, for example, of treaties that are made. I have made reference to the fact that the recent agreements that we have signed will mean peace in Vietnam and, eventually, throughout Indochina, we trust, but it will mean peace only to the extent that both sides and the leaders of both sides have the will to keep the agreement.

All the paper in the world, all the more fancy phrases that could have added to the very intricate phrases that are already in the agreement would mean nothing if the individuals who have the responsibility for keeping the agreement do not keep it.

We will keep the agreement. We expect others to keep the agreement. That is the way peace can be kept abroad—only, in other words, by the will of the individuals involved. And you must change the man or you must change the woman if the agreement is to be kept.

And so it is at home. We are concerned about conflict at home. We are concerned, for example, about the problems that divide us. They talk about the divisions between the generations, the divisions between the races, the divisions between the religions in this country, and we have them.

So, we can legislate about some of those divisions. For example, we pass laws—laws providing and guaranteeing rights to equal opportunity. But there is no law that can legislate compassion, there is no law that can legislate understanding, there is no law that can legislate an end to prejudice. That only comes by changing the man and changing the woman.

That is what all religion is about, however we may worship. That is what our religion is about, those of us who may be of the Christian religion.

So today, I would simply close with one thought. There is a lyric from a song I recall, that runs something like this: "Let there be peace on Earth and let it begin with me."

And so, abroad and at home, let that be our prayer. Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with each and every one of us in his own heart.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:05 a.m. in the International Ballroom of the Washington Hilton Hotel.

Representative Albert H. Quic of Minnesota presided at the first annual breakfast, sponsored by the United States Senate and House Prayer Breakfast groups.

In his opening words, the President also referred to Carl Albert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Arthur F. Burns, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.