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REMARKS OF REP. GERALD R. FORD, JR.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday
April 18, 1961

Mr. Speaker, ten years ago today Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg of Michigan passed away. At that time, the NEW YORK TIMES commented that "if America's adherence to the United Nations, its decision to oppose the expansion of Communist aggression, and its formulation of the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty are among the great events of our epoch, then Senator Vandenberg must retain a central place in contemporary history. The memory of his achievements is not likely to pass away for many years to come."

I cannot let this occasion pass without paying tribute to this man whose mind and spirit were great enough to put truth above consistency, conscience above pride of opinion, and country above party. In reviewing Senator Vandenberg's life, I would like to particularly stress five qualities which stood him in good stead during a career of national service which knows few parallels.

First and foremost, Senator Arthur Hendrik Vandenberg became one of the architects of American foreign policy which now works for world peace by combined international effort to make the non-Communist countries of the world so strong that no Soviet dictator would dare take the risk of starting a war of conquest. His historic address in January, 1945, indicating that he, who had been a noninterventionist before World War II now clearly perceived that the world had changed and had contracted, led the way to acceptance of America's role as a leader of the free nations of the earth. In that great address, he stressed that "we cannot drift to victory. We must have maximum united effort on all fronts. We must have maximum united effort in our councils and we must deserve the continued united effort of our own people." Much of the united effort we have undertaken since World War II has been due to the wisdom and efforts of Senator Vandenberg.

Senator Vandenberg also foresaw the need for a sound, dynamic Republican Party. He was six times that party's nominee for the post of President Pro-tem in the Senate before elevation to that post in the 80th Congress. About his party he once said, "I want the Republican Party to be liberal enough to march with the times, to dare new answers to new problems and to use the power and strength and initiative of Government to help citizens to help themselves." These words closely paralleled his personal philosophy of government, which he expressed as follows: "At one point the dictionary says, 'a conservative is one who seeks to prevent loss, decay or injury, and who protects and preserves.' In that sense I want my party to be conservative. But at another point it says that a conservative is 'one opposed to change or progress.' In that sense I do not want my party to be conservative. If it is static, it will die. It will promote

and not prevent decay for itself and country. This is not a static country nor a static age."

Again, Senator Arthur Vandenberg was not afraid to change his views when convinced that another was right. He had a genius for seeing what was in the other man's mind and in trying to get the best of that man's thought to formulate agreements which embodied the best of everybody's thinking. He believed the great strength of democracy lies in the fact that the best thoughts of a group of men lead to a stronger and wiser result than can be achieved through the efforts of one man no matter how brilliant or remarkable. His part in building a bridge from isolationism to internationalism, a lasting example of an intelligent American's response to events, inspired columnist Walter Lippman to say, "When a sudden and tremendous change of outlook has become imperative in a crisis, it makes all the difference in the world to most of us to see a man whom we have known and trusted going through the experience of changing his mind, doing it with style and dash, and in a mood to shame the devils of his own weakness."

I would also remind the members of this body that Senator Vandenberg put America above thoughts of personal gain, ambition and health. Those of us who were acquainted with the Senator for some time knew of the personal sacrifice he had undergone on behalf of this country, but it was even further dramatized after his death when the Senator's son reported, "The long interval between the discovering in 1948 of a tumor and its removal in October 1949, was due to the Senator's firm insistence that his health was of far less importance than his attention to affairs of government." This was hardly surprising, for at Philadelphia in 1948 he steadfastly refused to become a candidate for President for several reasons: the health of his wife, his concentration on foreign policy in the recent past, his age, plus a tiny spot on his lung which had been noted in his annual physical examination in Grand Rapids. And, most significantly of all, he refused to become a candidate because he felt he should stay on the job where he had demonstrated competence to serve the cause of fostering bipartisan unity in behalf of collective peace and security for us and for the world. He thought of the next administration rather than of the next election, and of the world rather than of personal gain.

Finally, Senator Vandenberg was a man who did all he could to make the world free and decent and honest. Besides his skill as a leader and a statesman, he was a fine person and citizen. He was considerate and fair in doing what he thought was right. He never failed to remember and serve his constituents in Michigan any more than he did the people of the world. He gave sympathetic understanding and friendship to those who knew him. As a newspaper man, as a writer, orator, and as an amateur artist and songwriter, and as a leader in the United States Senate, he exemplified nobility of character and integrity of citizenship and public service.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on for some time to stress other accomplishments in the life of Senator Vandenberg, including his work on the domestic scene as the father of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and an outstanding member of the Committees on Finance and Interstate and Foreign Commerce in the Senate. At this point I ask unanimous consent to revise and extend my remarks in order to include portions of an article by Dean Acheson on Senator Vandenberg and others among his contemporaries as it appeared in the April 1 issue of the SATURDAY EVENING POST. I certainly was pleased to note the comments by the former Secretary of State regarding Senator Vandenberg and his place in the emergence of the United States into world power and leadership.

Mr. Speaker, in Senator Vandenberg's personal office was a motto inscribed on a desk piece, stating, "And this, too, shall pass." He always suggested that this philosophy sustained him in adversity and restrained him in triumph. It gave him faith to meet buoyantly the discouraging experiences of life; on the other hand, when he was so often on the peak of success, victory and power, a glance at this motto had a leveling effect. Senator Vandenberg, who planned to one day write a book on the life of St. Paul, and who was a most loyal member of the First Congregational Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, lived in the unfailing belief that there are eternal values in the spiritual things of life.

In his younger days he wrote a book titled, "If Hamilton Were Here Today." We well might wonder as to how the responsibilities of future issues would be met if Vandenberg were here today. I certainly cherish his memory and the many acts of friendship which he accorded to me and to all others with which he came in contact. On this tenth anniversary of his death I am most grateful for his outstanding contributions to this country and to the world.

Following are excerpts from "My Adventures Among The U. S. Senators" by Dean Acheson which appeared in the SATURDAY EVENING POST for April 1, 1961:

When, in 1957, a committee of the Senate picked the five most "outstanding" Senators whose portraits should hang in the Senate reception room, it did not include Sen. Arthur H. Vandenberg. The choice fell on Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, Robert M. LaFollette and Robert A. Taft. Yet, in actual accomplishment, a good case can be made that Vandenberg's achievements exceeded those of any of the five, except Henry Clay. As a symbol of his times in the Senate, Vandenberg stands for emergence of the United States into world power and leadership, as Clay typified the growth of the country; Webster and Calhoun, the great debate of the ante-bellum days; and Robert M. LaFollette, the turbulence of the Progressive Era.

Vandenberg did not furnish the ideas, the leadership or the drive to chart the new course or to move the nation into it. But he made the result possible. What was

needed was a national consensus, at a time when the hot war, which had united the nation, was over and the full consequences of the disruption caused by the war were beginning to appear. How critical was the need can be judged by what happened after Vandenberg's death--I do not say because of it--when the consensus fell apart.

Without Arthur Vandenberg, answers to these questions could not have been brought into action. He had the capacity to learn and the capacity for action--rare gifts in themselves. As important as either, and giving both scope, he carefully maintained the preconditions for successful action. His prior history of isolationism was an asset which he never allowed to die. His relations with Sen. Robert Taft were carefully maintained. Vandenberg's respect for Taft's proprietorship of Republican domestic policy led Taft to respect Vandenberg's position as Republican spokesman on foreign policy, so long as the latter's health and vigor remained. Vandenberg kept the friendship and respect of Senators Eugene D. Millikin of Colorado, Kennedy S. Wherry of Nebraska and Styles Bridges of New Hampshire on the Republican Policy Committee. But, perhaps most important of all, he was in the very heart of the inner circle that ran the Senate.

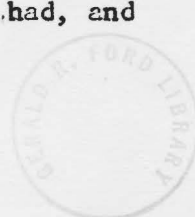
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His importance lies not in brilliance of mind or speech, but--in equal parts--in himself, and in the time and place in which he lived and served. Without Vandenberg in the Senate from 1943 to 1951 the history of the postwar period might have been very different.

Was Arthur Vandenberg a likable man? Yes, he was. He had humor and warmth and occasional bursts of self-revealing candor. He was not among the "popular" Senators. His ego was too strong for that. Some regarded him as Mr. James B. Reston, of the NEW YORK TIMES concedes he did for a time, as the "most pompous and prejudiced man in the United States Senate." But this was wrong. He was not that; but he took a bit of knowing. When I retired as Under Secretary of State in 1947 I wrote to thank him for a warm note which I described as "another of the long list of kindnesses which you have shown me" and "for your outstanding fairness and warm generosity." This was from the heart; he was a good friend.

All these gifts and qualities were what fitted Senator Vandenberg so pre-eminently to perform a service for which the country should be forever grateful; the service of bringing together in support of a foreign policy, dictated by the necessity of events, an Administration which could carry it out and an opposition which could have prevented it from doing so. All the brilliance of Calhoun or the eloquence of Webster could not have performed this service. It called for what Arthur Vandenberg had, and was, and had spent a lifetime in acquiring and in being.

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