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## The Nation's Future in the World (Billings)

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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For Release A.M.'s Monday, May 27, 1957

THE NATION'S FUTURE IN THE WORLD

Address of Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, Commencement Exercises  
Central Catholic High School, Billings, Montana  
8:00 P.M., Sunday, May 26, 1957

Ladies and gentlemen of the graduating class of 1957, distinguished members of the faculty, parents, relatives and friends. I am deeply honored to be asked to participate with you in this graduation.

To me, graduation means more than an end or a beginning. It means both at the same time. It means, in other words, a continuity which links one phase of life to another.

In this sense, a graduation is an expression of the law of life which is change in the unchanging. That may sound mysterious and profound. In fact, it is neither.

Look around you, think for a moment, and you will see the meaning of this law of life. You will see that in the past few weeks spring has come to replace winter and the earth has grown green again. You will see that boys and girls are moving into manhood and womanhood. Those of you who are old enough to remember - that would include only the gentlemen present - those of you who are old enough will note that even Billings has grown into something different, into a larger community with a new look, in the space of a few short years.

THE NATION'S FUTURE IN THE WORLD  
May 26, 1957 BILLINGS

If you look around you, then, if you think about it for a moment, you will be aware of change in all things - constant, endless change.

There is a sadness in some of this change. We are reluctant to see the passing of a time with which we are familiar, a time which has brought many happy associations. We are not certain of what will come in its place and it is hard to trust what we do not know.

Yet, change must come; that is clear. It seems to me that we can find strength to face the challenges of change, if we bear this in mind: the law of life is not only change; it is, as I noted, change in the unchanging.

Just as the spring has come this year, it will come again and again. Just as the earth has grown green this year, it will grow green each year in all the years to come. That is the constant. That is the unchanging in the changing.

So it is with the things that have lasting meaning in each of our lives. There, too, we will find things that are enduring in the midst of the changing. What, for example, made your days as students in this high school worthwhile? Your studies? No doubt. But studies change. Some will continue to interest you and some will not. Your extra-curricular activities? Undoubtedly. Perhaps some of you may think that they were even more worthwhile than your studies. But extra-curricular activities also change and some will continue to interest you and some will not.

I think that beneath these things, beneath the day to day routine of the past few years there was something deeper that made high school worthwhile for you. There was something less tangible perhaps than studies or extra-

curricular activities, but, in the long run, more important. There was something which gave lasting meaning to these years in your lives.

Was it, perhaps, the understanding that you had from friendly members of the faculty? Was it the affection which you shared with one another? Was it the courage with which you faced the problems of learning and living? Was it the faith you felt that life was good and God was good?

I know that these are things that a person is not aware of every minute of the day. That does not make them any less important. They are there, in all of us, and they are fundamental. They are constants, the enduring. They will be there with you throughout your life.

What we see, then, changes. What we do, changes. But what we are and what we feel underlies everything we see and do. That is the unchanging in the changing. If you go into the future with the understanding and tolerance, with the honesty, with the courage and with the faith, which gave deeper meaning to your life here during the past few years then you can go into it without fear. These feelings will guide you in dealing with whatever may arise in that future.

What applies to each of us individually also applies to our country. I talk to you today, about our country because its future and yours are closely interwoven. Just as your responsibility for your own future will grow increasingly heavier in the next few years, so too will your share of responsibility for the nation's future.

Countries, ours no less than others, are governed by the same law of life that governs each of us: change in the unchanging. It could hardly be otherwise, for nations are the creations of human beings. This nation is constantly changing. What we call the United States at this moment is not an abstraction. It is the product of the lives of all the individuals who have composed the nation since the beginning. It is the sum of the great lives and the unknown lives, the lives of the countless millions who have made their contribution in conquering a wilderness, in agriculture, in labor, in defense, in science and industry, in religion, in education, in ideas and hopes, in the raising of each new generation to maturity. All of these lives have left their impression on the shape of the nation and that is your national heritage. But just as the nation is different today than it was fifty years ago, fifty years from now it will be still something different.

The United States, in short, grows and changes as the individuals within it grow and change. It must change if it is to endure. As it is with the individuals so it is with the nation. In growing and changing there are certain constants which make our national existence worthwhile, which enable us to meet new challenges successfully.

When we think of our nation's future in the world it will be helpful to think of it in those terms, as though it were a growing individual. And I want you to think of the nation's future, today, for as I mentioned, it is interwoven with your own. Each of you will have much to do with shaping the future of the United States and that future, in turn, will exercise a great influence on yours.

Time does not stand still and neither does our country. I would like for you to reconstruct from your studies of history a picture of the United States a century ago. You will recall that our State of Montana, most states west of the Mississippi were settled then by a handful of people -- many of them were your grandparents and great grandparents -- many of them immigrants. They lived in isolated communities with little contact between one community and the next. They hunted and fished. They did some simple farming. They raised stock. They dug minerals from the mountains. They had few machines to help them. They had few of the conveniences that we take for granted today. There was no electricity, no telephone, no theatres, no radio or TV. They had few schools in which to educate their children.

Until the railroads came, there was little regular contact with the more settled areas of the eastern part of the country. Not many people knew or cared what was happening west of the Mississippi if they were east of it. And if they were west of the river they knew little of what was happening in the East. As for the rest of the world, few people in the United States knew anything about it or gave much thought to it.

Now, that has changed. The people who came to Montana, to the West, their children and their children's children built a new way of life here. Population has grown. The power of rivers has been harnessed through dams like Hungry Horse, Kerr, Tiber, Canyon Ferry, and more will be harnessed in our service through new dams like Libby in northwestern Montana and, in this section, Yellowtail, if we are ever able to convince the President that we need it, as you

and I know that we need it. New industries have developed and more will develop. Schools have multiplied and we have learned many new ways of thinking and doing.

Most significant in the changes of the past century within our state is that we are no longer a scattering of communities, isolated and unconnected. We are linked together as never before by a complex system of airways, rails and roads. We can pick up a telephone here in Billings and call any point in the state. Soon, I hope, TV will link every part of the state and the state with the rest of the nation, as radio already does.

What is all this leading up to? The point I am trying to make is that, over the past century, the citizens of this State have been drawn by the processes of change into closer and closer integration. What is happening within the State is also happening within the nation. All of the States are now tied together more closely than ever before.

What happens in other states and in Washington is now known to us immediately and affects us very directly. In turn, what we do affects the rest of the nation profoundly and is known elsewhere promptly. In other words, a great interdependency and unity has developed throughout the United States. This means that, more and more, the nation grows and prospers as a whole or it does not grow and prosper at all.

And what is happening in the United States is happening throughout the world. Other countries are no longer remote from us. We know promptly what is happening beyond our borders and others know promptly what is happening here.

Our products are sold in vast quantities on every other continent. We draw on those continents for many of the essential products of our daily life.

A few decades ago we would not have even learned of a political upheaval in the Middle East until days or perhaps weeks after it had occurred. Today, almost simultaneous with its occurrence, the President finds it necessary to dispatch a fleet of naval vessels to the scene because he believes it may involve our vital national interests.

In other words, a process similar to the integration which has gone on within our state and within the nation has also taken place in the world. We are no longer immune from the impact of events thousands of miles away. These events may act to hurt the nation or to help the nation. One thing is certain, however, sooner or later, they are bound to affect us.

No single person brought about this situation. It is the result of the never-ending process of change which goes on wherever there is life. We may not like the situation. We may feel uncertain as to where we are headed, just as I noted earlier you men and women may sense a sadness and uncertainty in graduating. Nevertheless, out of consideration for the nation's future, we have got to face these changes in the world. We have got to try to understand what they mean to us. We have got to try to deal with them in a way which safeguards the nation and its future.

What are the changes which have taken place in the world during these past few decades? Again, if you will recall your studies of history, you will have a picture of what the world was like a few decades ago so that we may contrast it



with what it is like now. You will recall that Europe, particularly Great Britain, a half-century ago was the citadel of international power. It shaped events practically everywhere else in the world. The United States and Japan were the principal exceptions. These two countries were growing rapidly in independent strength. Elsewhere, however, the countries of Europe controlled a seemingly inert and motionless world. The Europeans directed international commerce and industry and the political life of many peoples. China, India and most of Asia were in a state of political sleep. Latin America, Africa, and Australia-New Zealand were great but little known continents. They poured natural wealth into the channels of international commerce but otherwise had little effect on events in the world.

The Europeans themselves were divided into rival national states. So long as they kept their rivalries from erupting in war among themselves, however, the rest of the world did not challenge their combined power. Their rule over other peoples produced at least a semblance of peace and calm over the face of the earth.

Under the surface of this calm, however, change - that constant law of life - was at work everywhere. It was hidden and it was often suppressed but it was not to be denied. In two great wars and the swift cavalcade of international events in their aftermaths, the force of these long pent-up changes burst upon us.

We find ourselves, today, in another world, far different from that of a half-century ago. Europe is no longer the great citadel of power that once it was. Instead, the nations of that continent have had to struggle for years merely

to restore the devastation of World War II and to preserve their independent survival. And they would have been unable to do either had it not been for the help which this country extended to them. A dozen years after World War II, the European nations have still to regain their former importance and they are not likely to regain it unless they draw closer in unity among themselves. They are suspended between two poles. The one pole is the expanded totalitarian power of the Soviet Union. The other is the power of freedom of the United States. They are attracted towards us but many of their citizens look towards Russia or fear the power of Russia.

This new world in which we find ourselves today is also a world in which the slumbering nations of the past have awakened, India, China, nations in the rest of Asia, in the Middle East and Africa - these nations are coming out of a long night of political sleep. Some have awakened in a friendly, cheerful mood. Some have awakened growling and scowling. And some have just plain got up on the wrong side of the bed. Whatever the case, however, all of these nations are a part of this changed world in which we find ourselves and they have to be reckoned with.

So, too, are the developing nations of Latin America and elsewhere - Canada, for example. Each in their growing strength and in their expanding achievements are new factors in the world in which we must work out our future.

This world of today is also a world of instant communications. And it is a world in which space is losing its meaning. In aviation, distances are no longer calculated in miles but in hours of flying time; with the coming of the jet age they will soon be calculated in minutes and seconds.

It is a world in which nations depend intimately upon one another for the food, the minerals, the countless products which are essential to their existence. It is a world in which no one part is far from or can be separated from the rest.

It is, in short, a greatly different world from that of a century or a half-century ago. It is a world of new dangers. You graduates know from your science studies the grim possibilities which it contains. You know the implications of the threat of atomic war.

Even the testing of nuclear weapons let alone war with these weapons, raises complex questions. When a single hydrogen bomb is set off in a test in the Pacific, for example, it is necessary to close off over 400,000 square miles of the ocean to all ships to guard against accidental death or injury. And we do not yet know with any degree of certainty what the long-range effect of the so-called radio-active fallout from nuclear explosions will be on human life and future generations. We do know, however, that like X-rays, the effect of this fallout is cumulative and that it can be highly dangerous to mankind in concentrated amounts. Moreover, no nation is immune from it, even though the nation may be hundreds or thousands of miles from the scene of the explosions.

Three countries are already testing these nuclear weapons - the United States, Soviet Russia and Great Britain. Others will in all probability have them in the not too distant future. The level of radio-active fallout in the atmosphere will increase as testing increases.

That is the kind of new danger which confronts us in the present world. If testing of weapons alone is such a serious matter, it is not too difficult to imagine the danger posed by such weapons in the hands of an aggressor nation capable of delivering them in jet planes and guided missiles.

If the world today contains new dangers for the nation as it most certainly does, it also contains new hope. You graduates know from your studies that there are two sides to the coin of scientific progress. You know it is rich in the promise of a better tomorrow. You know that this world of today and tomorrow contains infinite possibilities of material progress for all mankind. Even more important, you know that the new international contacts which it compels can enrich our spirits and bring this planet closer to that brotherhood of man which God has enjoined upon us.

Let me turn now for a few minutes before closing to the implications of this world of today and tomorrow for the nation's future and for your individual futures. I think it is clear that we cannot safeguard the nation's place in this world if we start by imagining that we are living under conditions that existed a half-century ago.

We can no longer dismiss other nations as too remote to be of concern to us when we know that, in fact, they are no longer remote. We cannot assume that events thousands of miles away have no meaning for us when we know that three times in the lives of some of us, those events have plunged the nation into war. We cannot proceed on the old assumption that Europe still dominates the

world and will keep a kind of peace in it when we know in fact that power has gravitated from Europe towards the Soviet Union and towards the United States. We cannot ignore the fact that many new nations have come into independence in recent years and that they will be a force for good or evil in what happens from now on. We cannot, in short, turn back the clock.

To do so would be to try to preserve the nation in a world and time that no longer exists, a world and time when the principal danger we faced were frontier conflicts, fought with bow and arrow and musket, when people in this state and the West lived largely by hunting and fishing and simple agriculture. If this nation today were to plan and act on what existed yesterday, the real world would soon leave us behind. Even more likely, it would submerge us in its swift and ever-changing currents.

That is why this nation must be ever-alert to the continuing changes in the world. Our relations with other nations must reflect this awareness. The foreign policies which were adequate fifty years ago to protect the nation and its future had ceased to be satisfactory 25 years ago. Those of today will undoubtedly have to be adjusted tomorrow.

In other words, change is to be expected and it must be faced. If you recall, however, I stressed that the important thing was change in the unchanging. There are constants which have marked the life of this nation from the beginning. These can provide us with the strength to move into an uncertain future with the conviction that we can make it a worthwhile future no matter what it may contain. These constants include a belief in human freedom, in human equality and in human dignity.

They include a respect for the past coupled with a willingness to explore new paths of understanding and achievement. They include a willingness to defend our own rights coupled with full respect for the rights of others. They include a faith in ourselves and in God's infinite wisdom.

The task for the nation and that means all of us, then, is to seek always to enlarge our understanding of the world around us. The task for the nation is to adjust our relations with other nations in the light of its realities. The task for all of us is to see to it that in making these adjustments we do so without losing the unchanging, the enduring in our national life. I call upon you young men and women of the graduating class of 1957 to join with us in that task.

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