

Department of Information Services
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
East Lansing, Michigan 48823

News Bureau
Telephone: (517) 355-2281
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NOTE TO NEWS MEDIA

Attached is a copy of remarks by Dr. Walter Adams, acting president of Michigan State University, prepared for delivery at a special program Wednesday (Oct. 15) marking the Vietnam Moratorium.

Dr. Adams was one of three speakers who addressed a session at 11:30 a.m., Wednesday in the MSU Auditorium. The other two speakers were U.S. Representative Donald W. Riegle Jr., R-Michigan and U.S. Senator Philip A. Hart, D-Michigan.

Dr. Adams is a veteran of World War II, having landed with the 83rd Infantry Division in Normandy and participating in five major campaigns in the European Theater of Operations. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for heroic conduct.

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Remarks by
Dr. Walter Adams, Acting President of Michigan State University
MSU Auditorium
Oct. 15, 1969

VIETNAM: A PERVERSION OF U. S. PRIORITIES

As always, my remarks this morning are not dictated by Hanoi or Peking or Washington, but by personal conviction and conscience.

I shall speak neither about the legality nor the morality of U. S. involvement in Vietnam, but concern myself exclusively with our national self-interest. I shall assess the war's impact on this country in the clinically dispassionate parlance appropriate to cost/benefit calculations, and pose three questions: (1) What does the U. S. have to gain from this venture? (2) What is the price we pay? (3) Is the war worth this price?

My conclusion will be unmistakable: the Vietnam war is a national disaster, fought for ephemeral ends and paid for with a depleted society. Commitment of additional resources will not retrieve this futile investment. Discretion and wisdom, therefore, militate toward immediate disengagement - and the redirection of our efforts to national priorities which better serve our national interest.

In this context, as Senator Church of Idaho has said, "Vietnam is a showcase of bankruptcy, a hopeless war fought for insubstantial stakes. As a war for high principle, Vietnam simply does not measure up: The Saigon government is neither a democracy warranting our support on ideological grounds nor a victim of international aggression warranting our support under the United Nations Charter. As an effort to contain Chinese power, the war in Vietnam is irrelevant as well as unsuccessful; even if a Communist Vietnam were to fall under Chinese control, as I do not think it would, the gains to China would be trivial compared with those accruing from her industrialization and acquisition of nuclear weapons."

Let me underscore this point: we are wasting American lives and American treasure for a piece of real estate worthless to the defense of America. We are destroying a country in order to save it - ostensibly for principles which have not demonstrable relation to our national security. We are committing America to a fatal land war in Asia on the assumption that the Vietcong must be beaten in their native boondocks before they can scramble ashore in Australia or San Francisco - transported there, no doubt, by Hanoi's or Peking's invincible sampan navy.

I say to you without qualification that even if the domino theory were correct - even if the "loss" of Vietnam would mean the Communist conquest of all of Southeast Asia - which to me is speculative fabrication - I think our current position would be suicidal madness. Like ourselves, the Communists would find this area to be an impoverished mass of humanity stirred by nationalist aspirations and embroiled in constant revolutionary turmoil - a burden rather than an asset. The lords of Peking, who lack the resources to lift their own country from the depths of underdevelopment, could hardly afford to subsidize the developmental efforts of their potential satellites.

Just as conquest of the area would be a Pyrrhic victory for the Chinese, so even a total U. S. victory would not contribute one iota to the security of our country or its geopolitical posture in the world. Moreover, the cost of attempting such a victory (or even maintaining a stalemate) would exact an intolerable price - not only in casualties and treasure, but in terms of the violence it does to the fabric of American society, the quality of American life, and the validity of the American dream.

No nation has unlimited economic, human, intellectual, and spiritual resources. Even such affluent nations as the United States are not exempt from this universal law. This means that in striving to achieve its national goals, a country must make choices. It must arrange its objectives in some order of priority - an order which reflects its value system - its judgment as to what is more important and what is less important. The nation must then use its resources accordingly.

How long will it take us to learn that the United States cannot afford to impose or police a pax americana on a global scale - even if it were desirable to do so? How much more experience do we need before we understand that we cannot annually divert \$30 billions of economic resources as well as our intellectual energies to an irrelevant war on the Asian mainland while also contributing to the defense of Western Europe, conquering the moon, participating in the armaments and missile race, and maintaining a viable and just society at home? A choice between priorities is unavoidable: should we indulge ourselves in the ideological luxuries of Vietnam - feeding the arrogance that goes with power; or should we put our own house in order - fight the war against poverty, deprivation, despair, and bigotry at home before we attempt to deny an insignificant bit of territory to Communist ambitions abroad? Focusing on America's rational self-interest, the choice would seem too obvious for further debate.

I believe we can no longer be unmindful of the urgency and extent of America's domestic needs - needs which can overwhelm us just as surely as the threat of external aggression, unless we can find the wherewithal, the ingenuity, and the determination equal to the challenge. Let us contemplate the domestic needs which are neglected and postponed while we blithely squander \$30 billion annually on the war in Vietnam.

Because of our mistake in Vietnam, we are not building the 6 million housing units which the Riot Commission has recommended for America's ghettos. We cannot afford, it is said, the additional \$6 billion to provide compensatory education for deprived and handicapped children. We cannot afford the \$1.5 billion to provide the needed manpower training for the hard-core unemployed. We cannot afford the \$5 billion for model cities or the \$3 billion for community action programs under OEO. We cannot afford the \$26 billion needed to rid our rivers and lakes of industrial and municipal waste. We cannot afford to restructure our welfare system through a negative income tax which would cost some \$15 billion. We cannot afford an efficient urban transit system, a program to combat environmental pollution, provision for adequate health care, etc.

Let me restate the cost of our Vietnam commitment in yet another way. In the last decade, the federal government has spent 3 times more on Vietnam than on medicare and medical assistance, 4 times more than on all levels of education, and 15 times more than on housing and community development. It has spent more on this war than it spent in our entire history on public higher education or police protection. It has spent more on Vietnam in each of the last 3 years than it would cost to operate 350 universities like MSU per year - tuition free, and at no cost to the taxpayers. This, it seems to me, is not a rational allocation of national resources when our cities are decaying, 35 million Americans are living below the poverty level, our youth is alienated and disillusioned, our society is embittered by racial strife, and the American spirit is wracked by confusion and doubt. This is not an acceptable performance record, and today's events demonstrate that the American conscience no longer tolerates it.

In conclusion, let me remind you that, in 1789, our Founding Fathers created a new nation "in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity."

This has been the American dream and the hope of the world.

I say to you that U. S. participation in the Vietnam war is a betrayal of that dream and a mockery to that hope.

U. S. participation in the Vietnam war must be ended, and the time to end it is Now.