

FROM: THE OFFICE OF U.S. SEN. BOB DOLE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510
(202) 225-8947

108

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Floor statement of U.S. Sen. Bob Dole --- April 22, 1971

INCOMPLETE PROTEST

MR. PRESIDENT:

I have noted with some interest the presence of a number of Vietnam veterans in Washington this week. Washington, is, of course, no stranger to demonstrating veterans; but this group has emphasized the distinction that they are the first group to protest against the very war in which they served.

They have further stated that their protest in Washington is particularly directed at those who are responsible for the war in Indochina. This is all well and good. These citizens are within their rights to give voice to their convictions and their consciences. And they have defended these rights in a far-off and troubled corner of the world.

I would, however, suggest that the demonstrators may be committing a substantial error of omission in their demonstrations. They say they are here to confront the "responsible parties" so they have marched on the Pentagon, they have marched on the Congress and they have marched on the Supreme Court.

MISDIRECTED DEMONSTRATIONS

I find some illogic in the direction of these expressions toward President Nixon, Secretary of Defense Laird and the rest of this Administration. It is difficult to understand discontent with those who have turned around the course of the war, who have stopped the escalation, who have reduced the number of American forces in Vietnam by half and who are firmly committed to total and complete disengagement from South Vietnam.

Many, including myself, are impatient for the day when the American casualty rate reaches zero. We are impatient for the last American soldier to board the last homeward-bound airplane. We long for the day when the last shot is fired in anger in Southeast Asia --- and throughout the world.

(MORE)

DOLE -2-

But it is difficult to understand why this President and this Administration are being derided, criticized and scorned in the face of the progress they have made by effecting a fundamental reversal of our national course in Indochina.

Likewise, it is hard to see the validity of the protest directed at our judicial system for failing to declare our conduct of the Vietnam War to be contrary to the Constitution. Our involvement in that conflict may have been wrong from the beginning. It was certainly escalated and prosecuted incorrectly. But the war, especially since August 7, 1964, has had clear and repeated Constitutional sanction.

CONGRESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

August 7, 1964, was, of course, the date on which the Congress passed the Joint Resolution, granting the President authority "to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force . . ." in pursuing his policy in Southeast Asia. Popularly known as the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, this blank check grant of power was subsequently reiterated by the authorization and appropriation of funds to support our forces in Southeast Asia.

This brings me to the point that this week's demonstrators are committing an error of omission. While the demonstrations of these veterans who are opposed to the Indochina War are closest to their mark in approaching the Congress as a "responsible party," they are somewhat amiss with their selection of individual Members of Congress, particularly in the Senate, against whom to vent their opposition and displeasure. It seems they are leaving out several "responsible parties."

When you come down to the nub of the matter, it was the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution which the previous Administration relied on as a virtual declaration of war, and which was used as the fundamental authority for sending these protesting veterans, and more than half a million other American fighting men to Vietnam.

(MORE)

VIRTUALLY UNANIMOUS SUPPORT

The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution passed the House of Representatives and the Senate with but two opposing votes. No member of today's Senate or House, who was serving in either body in 1964, voted against its passage. And the junior Senator from Kansas voted "aya" as a member of the House at that time.

So I would suggest that when the public, whether veterans, non-veterans, Democrats, Republicans or Independents, sets out in search of "responsible parties" for the Vietnam war, they should be fully aware of the reach and scope of that responsibility. It was virtually the entire 87th Congress which passed that Resolution, and it is those individuals --- particularly those who are now serving in the 92nd Congress --- who bear the responsibility for the consequences.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that excerpts from the Congressional Record showing the votes of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution be printed in the record at this point.

THE FACTS SHOULD BE KNOWN

I feel it is important for protesters, non-protesters and all concerned citizens to be aware of these facts. I was quite surprised today, while visiting with members of the protesting veterans group, to learn that many individuals were totally unaware of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, much less its role in the history of our Southeast Asia involvement. I am hopeful that a wider awareness of these facts will enable this group and others like it to better understand the nature of the war against which they have so vigorously dissented.