

REMARKS OF HONORABLE BOB DOLE  
VETERANS' DAY MEMORIAL SERVICES  
VFW POST HOME  
TOPEKA, KANSAS  
MONDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1971

I AM ESPECIALLY PLEASED TO BE HERE ON THIS VETERANS DAY, BECAUSE IT PROVIDES A DOUBLY APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS A VITAL ISSUE WITH YOU. THIS IS AN ISSUE WHICH HAS NOT BEEN IN THE HEADLINES, BUT IT IS ONE IN WHICH I KNOW YOU, WHO HAVE SERVED OUR COUNTRY'S FLAG ABROAD, HAVE A DEEP AND STRONGLY FELT CONCERN.

IT IS AN ISSUE WHICH INVOLVES ALL AMERICANS, VETERANS AND NON-VETERANS ALIKE. IT IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO OUR NATION, BECAUSE ITS RESOLUTION WILL DETERMINE THE TONE OF OUR NATIONAL SPIRIT AND THE STRENGTH OF OUR NATIONAL SENSE OF UNITY FOR YEARS TO COME.

IN THE MOST REAL AND COMPELLING SENSE, THE FUTURE OF AMERICA IS AT STAKE.

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VICTIMS OF WAR

THERE WAS A TIME IN THE TANGLED HISTORY OF MAN WHEN WAR WAS VIEWED AS A GLORIOUS AND SPLENDID THING, AND MEN COULD DIVIDE THE SURVIVORS INTO VICTOR AND VICTIMS, BELIEVING THAT THE DISTINCTION WAS A VALID ONE. BUT THAT WAS LONG AGO, AND WE NO LONGER CAN AFFORD THE LUXURY OF THAT DELUSION. WE ALL ARE THE VICTIMS OF WAR.

IN AMERICA, THE VICTIMS ARE FEWER THAN IN THOSE LANDS WHICH HAVE BORNE UPON THEIR SOIL AND UPON THEIR PEOPLE THE HARD HEEL OF CONFLICT IN THIS CENTURY. WE HAVE KNOWN ANXIETY AND FEAR, AND DEPRIVATION OF SORTS. WE HAVE HAD THE LIVES OF FATHERS AND BROTHERS AND SONS HAMMERED OUT ON THE ANVIL OF WAR. BUT WHEN THE WAR WAS DONE, THE WOUNDS WERE GRADUALLY HEALED, AND WE HAVE GONE BACK AGAIN TO THE BUSINESS OF BUILDING OUR NATION, AND REBUILDING OUR LIVES.

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A BAFFLING EXPERIENCE

TODAY, HOWEVER, WE ARE EMERGING FROM A WAR DIFFERENT FROM ANY IN OUR HISTORY. IT HAS BEEN A LONG AND BAFFLING EXPERIENCE IN WHICH CONFUSION HAS CONFOUNDED OUR PURPOSES AND DOMESTIC CONFLICT HAS GROWN FROM THE SEEDS OF FOREIGN CONFLICT. IT HAS BEEN AN EXPERIENCE WHICH HAS DIVIDED OUR PEOPLE ON THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES OF WAR AND PEACE, OF THE PURPOSES OF ONE AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE OTHER.

IT HAS CREATED HUMAN PROBLEMS FOR EACH OF US, AND NONE MORE PROFOUND THAN THE PROBLEMS OF OUR VETERANS -- THE MEN WHO BORE THE BATTLE IN VIETNAM. IT WOULD BE UNWISE TO IGNORE THE BITTERNESS AND DEEP RESENTMENT RAISED BY THESE PROBLEMS. IT WOULD BE DANGEROUS TO IGNORE THE FACT THAT SOME AMONG US WANT A TARGET -- A SCAPEGOAT -- SOMETHING OR SOMEBODY THEY CAN TURN THEIR ANGER AND FRUSTRATIONS ON.

VETERANS MUST NOT BE VICTIMS

I HOPE, AND I BELIEVE, THAT WHATEVER ELSE WE HAVE SACRIFICED IN THIS WAR, WE HAVE NOT LOST OUR REASON NOR OUR COMPASSION NOR OUR SENSE OF BEING ONE PEOPLE IN PURSUIT OF ONE NATIONAL DESTINY. WE MUST NOT SEEK TO BREAK THE VETERANS OF THIS LONG AND TRAGIC WAR ON THE RACK OF NATIONAL RESENTMENT -- NOR CAN WE PERMIT OTHERS TO DO SO.

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IT IS NOT MY PURPOSE TODAY TO DISCUSS THE CAUSES OF THIS WAR, OR WHO IS RESPONSIBLE, OR WHAT IS RESPONSIBLE. RATHER, IT IS THE BUSINESS OF HISTORY TO JUDGE THIS, AS IT IS THE BUSINESS OF THIS GOVERNMENT OF A FREE AND POWERFUL PEOPLE TO MEET THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF FREEDOM AND TO FULFILL THE OBLIGATIONS OF POWER. THIS WE HAVE DONE. WE WERE ABLE TO DO IT BECAUSE A GENERATION OF YOUNG AMERICANS STOOD, AS OTHER GENERATIONS HAVE STOOD, ON BEHALF OF THIS NATION TO MEET ITS RESPONSIBILITIES AND OBLIGATIONS.

UNLIKE OTHER GENERATIONS IN OTHER WARS, THESE YOUNG MEN, AT BEST, COME HOME IN ANONYMITY TO BE MET WITH INDIFFERENCE. SOMETIMES THEY FIND GENUINE HOSTILITY. THEY ARE CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE OF PUBLIC OPINION. I DO NOT BELIEVE THIS IS ACCEPTABLE IN AMERICA.

#### SACRIFICE NOT RECOGNIZED

THESE ARE OUR YOUNG MEN, WHOM WE HAVE ASKED TO SERVE, AND TO BE PREPARED TO SACRIFICE THEIR LIVES FOR US. MORE THAN FORTY-FIVE THOUSAND OF THEIR COMRADES HAVE DIED. MANY THOUSANDS MORE HAVE LOST LIMBS OR SIGHT OR ARE CASUALTIES IN OTHER WAYS. AND IN A TIME WHEN WE ARE TRYING TO HELP THEM RECOGNIZE THAT WHAT THEY DID WAS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO AMERICA, WE FREQUENTLY FAIL EVEN TO DEMONSTRATE TO THEM THAT WE CARE.

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NO BANDS WELCOME THESE MEN HOME, NO FLAGS, NO PARADES,  
NO WARM WELCOMES -- EXCEPT PERHAPS FROM A FAMILY GRATEFUL TO HAVE THE  
SON OR BROTHER OR HUSBAND HOME. VERY LITTLE HOMAGE IS PAID TO THESE  
PEOPLE. INSTEAD, THE LAND THEY FOUGHT FOR -- THE LAND SO MANY OF THEIR  
BROTHERS DIED FOR -- NOW SO OFTEN TURNS ITS FACE AWAY.

HOW MANY AMONG US WOULD CHOOSE TO CHANGE PLACES WITH THESE  
YOUNG MEN? WHO AMONG US WOULD WANT HIS SON AMONG THEIR RANKS? HOW  
MANY WHO DENOUNCE THE WAR IN THE NAME OF THE MORAL BROTHERHOOD OF MAN  
NOW DENY THEIR OWN COUNTRYMEN BROTHERHOOD? HOW MANY, WHO DENOUNCE THE  
PEACE DEMONSTRATIONS OUT OF LOYALTY TO OUR FIGHTING MEN, SHOW THESE  
MEN THE LOYALTY THEY DESERVE WHEN THEY SUDDENLY BECOME A PRESENCE AMONG  
US AND NOT JUST A DISTANT CAUSE?

#### ADJUSTMENTS TO PEACETIME

WE HAVE MANY READJUSTMENTS TO MAKE IN ACCOMMODATING OUR  
NATION AND OUR ECONOMY TO PEACE ONCE AGAIN. THE ROAD WILL BE LONG AND  
HARD. IT WILL BE ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT FOR THE MEN WE ARE BRINGING HOME,  
BUT WE CAN AT LEAST WALK WITH THEM AND NOT TURN ASIDE. AND WE MUST --  
BECAUSE, WHEN AMERICA CALLED THEM, THEY DID NOT TURN ASIDE.

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SPECIAL PROGRAMS CREATED

THROUGH THE VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION, AND, AS WELL, THROUGH PRIVATE EFFORTS, WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO PROVIDE FOR HOMECOMING VIETNAM VETERANS IN A BROAD VARIETY OF WAYS. THE PROBLEM OF DRUG ADDICTION, AS YOU KNOW, IS CRITICAL. THE PRESIDENT HAS SUBMITTED TO THE CONGRESS LEGISLATION WHICH WILL ENABLE US TO MEET THIS PROBLEM, AND IN THE MEANTIME, HE HAS PROCEEDED WITH EFFORTS TO CURB ADDICTION AND REHABILITATE ADDICTS. SPECIAL CARE IS BEING PROVIDED FOR RETURNING VETERANS WHO ARE ADDICTED.

THE JOBS FOR VETERANS PROGRAM WHICH PRESIDENT NIXON CREATED ONE YEAR AGO IS ACTIVE IN FORTY-SEVEN STATES AND 285 CITIES, AND IS BEGINNING TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON VETERAN EMPLOYMENT. EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS HAVE BEEN INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY, AND PROVISION HAS BEEN MADE FOR SPECIAL TUTORING AND REMEDIAL TRAINING. FUNDS ARE PROVIDED FOR APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS. RECENTLY THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FUNDED A NEW PROGRAM TO HELP DISADVANTAGES VETERANS INTO JOBS AND JOB TRAINING, USING OTHER VETERANS TO HELP WITH THIS EFFORT. MANY BUSINESS LEADERS ARE ASSISTING IN THE EFFORT TO PUT VETERANS INTO JOBS. THE

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ADMINISTRATION IS STUDYING ADDITIONAL MEANS BY WHICH IT CAN HELP THE VETERAN BACK INTO THE SOCIETY HE HAS HELPED TO DEFEND, AND THE PRESIDENT HAS PLEDGED THE FULL WEIGHT OF HIS OFFICE TO THE WELFARE OF THESE MEN.

PROGRAMS NOT ENOUGH

BUT LET US RECOGNIZE THAT PROGRAMS ALONE ARE NOT ENOUGH. WE NEED SUCH PROGRAMS OF ASSISTANCE. BUT WE ALSO NEED SOMETHING THAT IS FAR MORE IMPORTANT, SOMETHING THAT WILL DO FAR MORE GOOD NOT ONLY FOR OUR VETERANS, BUT FOR OUR COUNTRY ITSELF.

WE NEED THIS GREAT NATION TO PUT ASIDE ITS BITTERNESS, AND NOT INFLICT IT ON THE VETERANS OF THE VIETNAM CONFLICT.

OUTREACH REQUIRED

I HAVE TALKED WITH MANY OF THESE PEOPLE COMING HOME, AND I KNOW THAT ONE OF THEIR GREATEST PROBLEMS IS JUST SIMPLE COMMUNICATIONS. MANY HAVE BEEN THROUGH THE MOST DIFFICULT TIME THEY WILL EVER KNOW IN THEIR LIVES. THEY HAVE NOT BEEN THROUGH THESE THINGS WITH A FEELING OF HAVING THE FULL SUPPORT OF THEIR COUNTRYMEN BEHIND THEM. INSTEAD, THEY HAVE A SENSE OF ISOLATION FROM WHAT THEY CALL "THE WORLD" -- BY WHICH THEY MEAN THEIR OWN HOMELAND.

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THEY OFTEN FIND THEMSELVES FORCED BACK INTO A COMMUNITY OF THEIR OWN -- A COMMUNITY OF OTHER VETERANS CREATED BY COMMON EXPERIENCE AND COMMON NEED. OF ALL THEIR DIFFICULTIES, PERHAPS THE MOST AGONIZING IS THE FEELING SO MANY HAVE OF NOT REALLY BEING A PART OF THEIR OWN PEOPLE ANY LONGER -- OF BEING EXILES IN THEIR OWN LAND -- OF NOT REALLY BEING ABLE TO RETURN AGAIN TO A SENSE OF BELONGING.

#### INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

I THINK THAT OF ALL THE PROBLEMS WHICH CONFRONT OUR VETERANS, THIS IS THE ONE EACH ONE OF US AS AN INDIVIDUAL CAN MOST DIRECTLY HAVE A HAND IN SOLVING. WE CAN DO IT SO EASILY, AND IN A WAY WE KNOW WELL -- AN AMERICAN WAY. WE CAN DO IT BY SIMPLY REACHING OUT OUR HANDS TO THEM, LISTENING TO THEM, LETTING THEM KNOW THAT WE DO CARE ABOUT WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN THROUGH, AND THAT WE ARE GRATEFUL.

AND IN A LARGER SENSE, WE NEED TO BIND UP THE WOUNDS AMONG US ALL, AND NOT PROBE THEM FOR THE JUSTIFICATION OF ONE POSITION OR ANOTHER.



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WE NEED TO OPEN THE DOORS OF DISCOURSE ONCE AGAIN, AND DETERMINE WHERE WE WILL GO FROM HERE, AND WHAT KIND OF NATION WE WANT TO BE. IT IS GIVEN TO FEW NATIONS IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD TO BE SO RICH, SO POWERFUL, AND SO FREE THAT THEY CAN DETERMINE THEIR OWN DESTINY, AND NOT HAVE IT DETERMINED FOR THEM. WE CAN DO THAT, IF WE WILL.

A TIME FOR HEALING

WE NEED TO TAKE FROM THE FIRES OF WAR NOT THE ASHES OF RECRIMINATION AND HATE, BUT THE FLAME OF RECONCILIATION AND LOVE.

THERE IS A TIME TO REND, AND A TIME TO HEAL...A TIME OF WAR AND A TIME OF PEACE. NOW IS A TIME FOR HEALING. FOR IF HEALING DOES NOT COME, THOUGH WE MAY ACHIEVE PEACE IN THE WORLD, THERE WILL BE NO PEACE IN AMERICA.

SO LET US NOT BRING OUR YOUNG MEN HOME TO A DIVIDED HOUSE. LET US NOT INVITE THE CONTEMPT OF HISTORY BY REJECTING THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT THE PEACE. LET US RATHER SEEK TO BE WORTHY OF THEM.

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LET EACH WHO BORE THIS BATTLE IN HIS HEART REACH OUT TO  
THOSE WHO BORE IT ON THEIR BODIES, RESOLVING THAT THE LESSONS OF THIS  
TIME HAVE NOT BEEN TAUGHT IN VAIN, THAT THE SEEDS OF SACRIFICE SHALL  
NOT HAVE FALLEN ON BARREN GROUND, AND THAT THIS NATION, WITH GOD'S  
GUIDANCE, SHALL TURN FROM THIS HARSH WINTER OF WAR TO A NEW AND LASTING  
SPRING OF PEACE AND HOPE AND PROMISE FOR ALL OUR PEOPLE.