

from the office of

*Senator Edward M. Kennedy
of Massachusetts*

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ADDRESS OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY
THE BROWN UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT FORUM
" THE NUCLEAR FREEZE AND ARMS CONTROL "
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND
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Every generation has its own mission in the life of the nation. Your generation may well be the peace generation, because the issue of nuclear war or peace will in all likelihood be settled by you.

Twenty years ago, in Washington, President Kennedy called for a treaty to ban nuclear tests--as the first step in a strategy of peace to ban nuclear war.

The words he spoke then ring now with a timeless truth. Despite loose talk today about a nuclear warning shot and a winnable nuclear conflict, we know the abiding truth of his warning then that "total war makes no sense" in this age. And so we insist once more as clearly as we can that there is no such thing as a limited nuclear war.

Yet some government officials continue to plan for one. Not long ago an expert on the National Security Council foresaw a 40 percent probability of such a conflict. And a Deputy Under Secretary of Defense said that all we need to survive is a shovel to dig a hole, a door and a pile of dirt on top to keep out the fallout.

Recently we discovered that the Post Office is actually preparing change of address cards to be filled out in the event of a nuclear attack. They have a plan to deliver all the mail right after the holocaust. But even the Postal Service cannot deliver to that address. Rain and snow and sleet may not stay their appointed rounds--but I think that a nuclear war probably will.

Some officials in Washington are also talking about a civil defense scheme to evacuate all our major cities, which would require a week's advance warning of an impending Soviet attack. What are the Russians supposed to think, if their spy satellites suddenly see streams of cars pouring out of Providence, crawling along Route 95, heading for the beaches of Newport and Point Judith?

Despite such plans and despite the escalation of bellicose rhetoric from the centers of power in both of the most powerful nations, we must learn to live in peace with the Soviet Union. We dare not misuse what is wrong in the Soviet system as an excuse for denying what is right in Soviet-American relations--which is the overriding imperative of nuclear arms control. No government should be regarded as so much of an "evil empire" as to justify reckless policies which could subjugate the world to the permanent evil empire of radioactive death. We must demand a national leadership which will spend less time preparing for nuclear war--and more time preventing one.

There is no morality in the mushroom cloud. The black rain will fall equally on the just and the unjust. And the world that is left in the ashes of Armageddon will little note nor long remember which was the evil empire.

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At one of the forums this afternoon, Dr. John Pastore, of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, will discuss the medical consequences of this ultimate confrontation. I have seen the nuclear threat up close in a place where it became all too real. I have stood in Hiroshima. I have talked to the survivors of that first nuclear holocaust. They speak of a blinding light, a burning wind, the cries of the injured, heard but not heeded. And anyone who stands in that spot or who hears Dr. Pastore and understands the threat, must make a commitment to do all that must be done to see that it shall never happen again.

So I do not agree with the advice that citizens must not offer an alternative because it will undermine the present negotiations. That is what other Administrations have said in their effort to mute dissent in other dark days on other difficult issues. And in the case of Vietnam, tens of thousands of Americans and hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese died before the lesson was learned that the answer to failure is not more of the same.

Our strategy of peace must be based on a realistic assessment of our relationship with the Soviet Union. For too long, we have strayed between two misconceptions about the Russians--between overblown illusions of cooperation and overstated notions of confrontation. An arms control treaty will not tame Soviet misconduct in other areas. And the refusal to negotiate such an agreement, even when it is in our national interest, will not free Afghanistan, or break the repression in Poland, or stop the flow of arms to Central America. In short, we cannot punish the Russians by raising the risk of nuclear war. We hear about linkage--but we must not forget our fundamental common link as people on this planet--that we shall all live or die together.

We do not fear economic competition or ideological rivalry with the Soviet Union. We believe in individual enterprise and human liberty--and with inspired leadership, that belief can have the most powerful appeal, as it has in the past, to the rest of the world. How many immigrants have ever moved to the Soviet Union in search of a better life?

The one place where the Russians know they can compete is military power--and they will pay any price to prevent us from forcing them into a position of military inferiority. We can and we should maintain strategic parity--which requires a sufficient and a secure deterrent. We can and we should strengthen our conventional forces--so that we can avoid reliance on nuclear retaliation during a crisis.

But for both great powers, arms control is a far saner way to preserve strategic parity than an endless arms race. Despite the differences which divide the United States and the Soviet Union today, and which will divide us for years or generations to come, what must unite us is an unflinching determination to avoid nuclear annihilation. We must seek to maintain our freedom and the peace at the same time--for there will be no such thing as liberty in a lifeless land.

Both sides today are at essential nuclear parity. Even in the unlikely event that a Soviet first strike destroyed all our land-based missiles, we would still have 3,500 warheads on our submarines and our bombers--enough to destroy every Soviet city and town seven times over. The United States has the capacity to make the Soviet rubble bounce all the way from Moscow to Vladivostok--and the Soviets can make our rubble bounce all the way from Providence to the Pacific.

A year ago, a number of us in Congress took up a cause and a challenge that had already stirred at the grassroots across the country. We called for an immediate, mutual and verifiable freeze between the United States and the Soviet Union on the testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons.

The opponents of the freeze contend that we cannot halt the arms race in the face of the continuing Soviet build-up. But in fact, a bilateral freeze is the best way to prevent that build-up. It would halt the entire new generation of weapons which the Soviets are now developing--

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including the Blackjack bomber, the Typhoon submarine, cruise and land-based mobile missiles. The cries of alarm about Soviet advances in the future amount to a compelling reason to freeze the present balance of forces--and to stop the threatening trends now.

The Administration prefers to respond instead with an American nuclear weapons build-up. But you do not have to be an Isaac Newton to understand that for every American action in the arms race, there will be an equal and opposite Soviet reaction. The lesson of the past generation is that the Soviets will match our escalation step by step--bomber for bomber, missile for missile, warhead for warhead. And so we drift, as Einstein said, toward unparalleled catastrophe.

Our opponents also say that a freeze may be impossible to verify. But impartial experts have testified again and again that a freeze is at least as verifiable--and probably more so--than other arms control agreements, including the President's own START proposal. Moreover, we have made it clear from the beginning that anything which cannot be verified will not be frozen. We do not advocate a freeze because we trust the Russians. But we do distrust those who would continue the arms race at any and all costs.

And there are also opponents of the nuclear freeze who explain that they favor reductions instead. But there is a darker side to their slogan. Reductions are not all they want. While professing limits on older weapons, they want no limits on the newest and most modern weapons--which are also the costliest and the most threatening.

For example, the Administration's START proposal for reductions would still permit us to build the B-1 bomber--which is nothing more than a supersonic Edsel in the sky. And it would also permit the unrestrained pursuit of their Star Wars scheme for outer space--which would open another trip wire for nuclear war.

This really is a very strange idea. We cannot found national policy on fond memories of radio serials, dreams of the Old West, and the thrilling days of yesteryear. We must reject the preposterous notion of a Lone Ranger in the sky, firing silver laser bullets and shooting missiles out of the hands of Soviet outlaws.

The best defense against nuclear war is arms control and then disarmament.

The Administration answers that we need the threat of new weapons as bargaining chips and to close the window of vulnerability. Last year the President claimed we were vulnerable because the Russians could hit and destroy our existing Minuteman silos. So he appointed a commission which reviewed every conceivable solution to the problem of Minuteman silos. It's like having a car that is getting wet because of a leaky garage roof--and then trying to solve the problem by changing the make of the car.

MX is a missile without a mission and weapon without a home. It is time to say "No" to this latest incarnation of nuclear madness--it is time to say MX is a mistake.

Frankly, the more I hear from this Administration about the MX missile, the more I feel like standing up on the Senate floor--and reciting "Jabberwocky."

Support for a nuclear weapons freeze does not mean that we seek a weaker America. We have watched in recent weeks as ministers of the Gospel have been urged to preach in favor of an escalating arms race. But in the Scriptures I have read, nowhere does it say: "Blessed are the warmakers and the munition manufacturers." We have witnessed the revival of McCarthyite tactics which equate dissent with disloyalty--and which imply that the advocates of a freeze are somehow or other dupes or pawns. But someone should tell the apostles of this reincarnated Red Scare that the freeze movement is as American as Massachusetts and Rhode Island, which is where it all began.

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Support for the Freeze does not mean opposition to a strong national defense. I favor a real growth of five percent in the military budget to assure readiness and reliability. The President is demanding twice as much. But we cannot afford military waste which weakens the nation--and which has subverted the national consensus for a sustained improvement in our forces, especially our conventional capability. Instead of lavishing our treasure on first strike weapons, let us spend it on first class schools and first class colleges for our students.

And let us never forget that national security includes the condition of our society as well as the size of our missiles. The world in an arms race is also a world impoverished. For America, running that arms race cripples our capacity to do anything else.

Two months after his Inauguration in 1953, President Eisenhower said: "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed."

Today we are cutting immunization for children in order to finance the weapons that may someday kill them. Every new shelter for a missile means fewer homes for our families. Every new warhead guidance system that can read enemy defenses means more pupils who will not learn to read. Every new escalation that could mean death at an early age across the earth also darkens the golden years of our senior citizens now.

We hear rhetoric from our highest officials about eliminating budgetary waste. If they are serious, let them enter into a nuclear Freeze; let them pursue nuclear reductions; let them eliminate the expenditures that now make a desert of our dreams--and that someday could make a cold wasteland of all the earth.

In closing, let me say something special to each of you who are students here, and to all those of your age who share the high ideals of this occasion. The conscience, the caring, the commitment that you and your generation bring to the nuclear issue can help to determine the direction of our country and even the fate of the earth.

Others before you have faced a similar test. The young were there in the 1960's, in the forefront of the fight for civil rights and the struggle against the Vietnam War. In the 1970's, your older sisters and brothers summoned America to protect the priceless heritage of our environment, and to provide equality for the majority of our people who are women.

Now in the 1980's, a moment of history and a sense of hope call your generation to work as great as any that has gone before--the work of peace. The challenge comes with special warning now because the danger has become so present and so clear. The difference each of you can make, if all of you try, may mean the difference between peace and war, between a just society and a garrison state.

What happens at Brown and in the many other colleges and communities of America is of enduring importance for the future of our nation. You did not make the world you live in, but you have the chance to change it.

Twenty years ago this week, when President Kennedy spoke for a nuclear test ban treaty, it was a day very much like this, at a commencement at American University.

On that occasion, he pointed to the interests that unite all human beings everywhere:

"We all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."

I know how much my brother Jack cherished John's future--and how proud he would be if he could be here today. And he would be proud as well that so many of you continue to share his faith that public involvement is an honorable and worthy adventure.

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