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Foreign aid appropriations bill

Strom Thurmond

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STATEMENT BY SEN. STROM THURMOND (D-SC) REGARDING THE FOREIGN AID APPROPRIATIONS BILL, JULY 23, 1955.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Senate has approved over my objections and those of 21 of my colleagues a foreign aid appropriations bill totaling approximately $3.2 billion for fiscal year 1956. This measure will go to a Senate-House free conference committee where I hope conference members will agree on the lower House approved figure of $2.6 billion since it cannot be reduced below that amount. This conference will be interesting to watch because several House members have already stated they will not approve a penny over $2.6 billion.

In addition to voting against final passage of this huge spending program, I also voted in favor of a number of amendments offered by Senator Ellender (D-La.) designed to reduce the appropriations by 25 per cent.

While I do believe that a certain amount of foreign spending is necessary to stave off Communism in friendly countries, I cannot agree to vote extra money for this purpose when this program should be tapering off. Some of these nations we have been sending aid since World War II are now on their feet economically and need little if any assistance from the United States.

With this appropriation passed by the Senate, we will have given away more than $37 billion in economic aid and more than $20 billion in military aid through fiscal year 1956. This money -- which we have had to borrow -- has been spent over 11 years through some 30 major foreign assistance programs.

In a speech on the Senate floor, Senator Harry Byrd (D-Va.), chairman of the Finance Committee, made this point: "If we did not now have this expenditure for foreign aid and if we did not have to pay the interest on the debt created by previous foreign aid expenditures, we could balance the budget and reduce taxes across the board by 5½ per cent."

It is disheartening to those of us who have been taking consolation in the thought that foreign aid spending was declining to find that this year, instead of curtailing these expenditures, the administration has requested funds to increase appropriations by approximately 10 per cent over last year.

If we are ever going to balance the budget and give the necessary tax relief at home, then I believe we must begin to curtail foreign spending at a time when most of the other nations of the world have regained their standing economically and are enjoying some degree of prosperity.

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