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Foreword to the Special Issue

George McGovern
United States Senator

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Foreword to the Special Issue

SENATOR GEORGE MCGOVERN

The Bicentennial offered us the opportunity to reflect upon our history, to examine what we have achieved in the past two hundred years, and to review our current role -- at home and in the world.

We have six percent of the earth's population. We hold thirty percent of the world's wealth. Yet we contribute less than a quarter of one percent of our national product to the development of the third world. Half of the world is ill-housed, ill-clad and ill-fed. They cry out for our compassion. We must be more than the least help of that earth, for which we once were the last, best hope.

How many people now see America as a worthy influence, as a witness to the world for what is noble and just in human affairs? A militarist, interventionist foreign policy has placed us at odds both with our own principles and with the aspirations of most of the planet.

Born in revolution, we have become the leading counter-revolutionary force in the world. Conceived in liberty, we most often find ourselves defending one kind of totalitarianism out of fear that it might be replaced by another. Endowed with vast wealth, the Pentagon lavishes it on arms while the President vetoes jobs, housing, and health care.

This is not billions for defense, but for nonsense. We must meet real threats, but we need not exaggerate them in order to recognize them.

We have long since passed the point when mounting arms amounted to more safety. A new internationalism must pass beyond that sterile condition. It lies instead in a clear recognition of global interdependence; in a common resolve to feed the hungry, to revive the economy, to repair the ecology, to reverse the mindless population growth of a small planet where the great issue no longer is who will prevail, but whether humanity will survive.