King brings message of solidarity to K-State

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. delivers a speech Jan. 19, 1960, in Ahearn Field House. Despite his personal dedication to non-violence, King was shot April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tenn., by James Earl Ray. Today is the first observance of a national holiday in his memory.

"The nation has a debt that it must pay. If ever it refuses to pay that debt, the fewer problems there will be — the more we will see the crisis in our cities, developing and developing. There should be a massive program, a kind of Bill of Rights for the disadvantaged, that will truly grapple with the aims, the economic problem generally, and all the things that I have tried to outline. We have the resources as a nation to do that. The question is whether America has the will. I am afraid that we do not think such mixed-up priorities nationally that without hard work we will not respond to this crisis.

I submit to you today that we spend $100,000 for every Viet Cong we ever kill in Vietnam, and yet we spend only $10 a year for every person characterized as poverty stricken in the so-called war against poverty. I am afraid that the national administration is more concerned about winning what I consider an unjust, ill-considered war in Vietnam than it is about winning the war against poverty right here at home.

Somebody said it is not too long ago:

"On King, don't talk in line with the administration's policy from now on, because many people who respect you will respect you and this will hurt the budget of your organization. Don't you think you are going to"

And I had to look at that person and say: "I am sorry, sir, but you do not know me. I am not a consensus leader. I do not determine what is right and what is wrong by looking at the budget of my organization or by taking a Gallup poll of majority opinion. Ultimately, if I am a genuine leader, I am not a consensus leader. I do not determine what is right and what is wrong by looking at the budget of my organization or by taking a Gallup poll of majority opinion. Ultimately, if I am a genuine leader, I am not a consensus leader."

On some problems, I would ask the question: "Is it safe?" Expenditure asks the question: "Is it polite?" Vanity asks the question: "Is it popular?" But conscience asks the question: "Is it right?" It comes to a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor polite, nor popular. He must take it because conscience tells him that is the right and that is where I stand today. Suffice it to say the economic situation is real. If we are to get that additional distance, we must work passionately.

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