

Vietnam will be forever on the Mall. It was certainly never my intention of this project to become the object of so much disagreement and so much controversy. Yet, it was never my intention for this project to be viewed as a textbook example of how to select a public work of art.

The statue is a great tribute to those who served in Vietnam who are very, very highly praised among Vietnam veterans and among those who once again want to be united behind building this national memorial.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you very much.

This, I take it, completes the leadoff presentation and we now open the floor to the people who have registered their support of the proposal. The first being the Under Secretary of the Department of Interior, Honorable Donald Hodel.

MR. HODEL: Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission, I appreciate this opportunity to appear before you on behalf of Secretary of the Interior James Watt to outline our position on a very important matter, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. For too long, our Nation largely ignored the veterans of Vietnam; very few were welcomed home with public appreciation for their commitment to duty and service to their

country. This, of course, was a marked contrast to the welcome accorded to veterans of previous conflicts.

Fortunately, there were those with the requisite courage, foresight, and compassion to act to ensure that this wrong was corrected. Hence, efforts were started to authorize, build and dedicate a fitting memorial to the thousands who served our country in Vietnam. The effort bore fruit in 1980, when Congress enacted PL 96-297, which authorized the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, VVMF, to design and construct a memorial to our Vietnam veterans.

Of course, we are all familiar with the controversy that has engulfed this project since the initial design was accepted by the VVMF. Many argued that the initial design was appropriate; others maintained it honored only those who died in the war, and some contended it made an unacceptable political statement about our Nation's role in Vietnam. It was particularly distressing that much of the criticism came from the veterans themselves who are, after all, the group we are seeking to honor.

Since the Secretary is required to approve the memorial pursuant to the terms of the Congressional authorization, we were subjected to considerable pressure to totally disapprove VVMF's initial submission, radically modify it, or

insist that the design process be started all over again. Simultaneously, many Members of Congress with a deep and abiding interest in the memorial were also seeing and feeling the results of the controversy. Fortunately, a group of Senators and Representatives under the leadership of Senator John Warner intervened to determine if an appropriate solution could be devised. Following consultation with interested Members of Congress and veterans, Secretary Watt committed himself and the Department to working with the Congressional group and the veterans organizations to achieve a resolution.

Others can provide more explicit details of the long and often difficult sessions that Senator Warner chaired. The result of these efforts was a basic agreement among the veterans that the initial design would be augmented by the addition of a flagpole to fly the American flag and a sculpture depicting a serviceman or men. This became known as the "compromise." This compromise was accepted by the veterans. It was accepted by the interested Members of Congress. Based on this consensus, the Secretary then communicated with this Commission and the National Capital Planning Commission regarding the compromise and received assurances that led him to believe that both would act favorably to approve the design refinements. Following such general

acceptance and the receipt of assurances, the Secretary issued the required construction permits to VVMF. Let me repeat that the Secretary of the Interior has acted in good faith to carry out this compromise, with assurances from this Commission that a flag and sculpture would be approved.

VVMF acted quickly to make the refined design a reality by commissioning a noted sculptor and taking steps to determine a suitable location for the sculpture and the flag. On September 23rd, VVMF submitted the sculpture design and siting and the location of the flag to the Secretary for his review and approval. In keeping with our commitment to the compromise and our desire to support the veterans, the Secretary quickly and enthusiastically approved the refinements and submitted them to this Commission for your consideration today.

We have, however, made one change from the previous arrangement in March to accommodate the concerns of the veterans organizations. Originally, it was agreed that the memorial would not be dedicated until it was complete, including the flag and the sculpture. It was brought to the Secretary's attention that a National Salute to Vietnam Veterans has been scheduled for the period of November 11 through the 13th, 1982. Veterans groups led by the American

Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, AmVets, and the Disabled Veterans requested that the memorial be dedicated during this salute when thousands of veterans, especially including those of the Vietnam conflict, will be in Washington. Since it would be fitting and appropriate to dedicate this memorial during this salute, the Secretary indicated that he is prepared to issue the requisite permits for a dedication to occur. However, we remain totally committed to ensuring execution of the compromise.

Accordingly, we will issue the dedication permits if the compromise design refinements are approved by this Commission and the National Capital Planning Commission even though the sculpture cannot be completed in time for the salute. To permit dedication of the memorial to proceed if the flag and sculpture have not yet been approved would be to break faith with all those who negotiated in good faith to reach a compromise last March.

Consequently, we urge the Commission to approve immediately the design refinements submitted to us by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and transmitted to you by the Secretary. The Secretary has personally viewed the model of the sculpture, seen the site model indicating the location of our flag, and walked the site of the memorial. He believes

that the addition of these items will create a powerful monument to those who served our country in Vietnam and to those who made the ultimate sacrifice. We find it incomprehensible that adding a sculpture of three servicemen and our Nation's flag constitutes an affront to anyone or diminishes this memorial. We also believe that we must remember the purpose of this memorial: it commemorates and honors the service that thousands rendered to their country. We would do well to listen to those who we are honoring and ensure that the memorial meets with their approval.

Thank you.

MR. NETSCH: Mr. Secretary, I am curious. No one in this room is opposed to having the American flag at the memorial. I am just curious as to whether a policy is being established that all memorials have flags? I am just trying to understand. You use the word "compromise."

I don't think a flag is a compromise. Does that mean that there will be a flag flying at every memorial in Washington?

MR. HODEL: I do not believe that issue is before the Commission. It appears to me that this is the result of earnest efforts by people of good will and good faith attempting to work out a very specific and difficult issue.