

**Rep. Charles W. Vursell Speech**  
**Dec. 4, 1947**

**Many of Truman's opponents in Congress were quick to criticize the Marshall Plan. One of them was Republican Charles Vursell of Illinois, who made this speech before Congress in December.**

For a website version of the speech, go to the following link:

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=855>

...This Congress is faced with grave decisions. We are being asked to take from the American people in money and supplies at a critical time of shortages on every hand, \$597,000,000 for immediate emergency relief. Later we are being asked by the administration to enter into a 4-year contract to furnish some \$20,000,000,000 or more in money and supplies to implement the Marshall plan. In the interest of our own people and Nation, we must not approach them in an atmosphere of hysteria and emotion; we must think as realists...

...[B]y holding up the false specter of starvation, the administration and the thousands of bureau propagandists and friendly commentators, over the air, seek to influence the American people and the Congress by the biggest barrage of propaganda ever turned loose on the public, to support the \$20,000,000,000 Marshall plan...

...[T]hose who favor the Marshall plan will tell you that we must rebuild western Europe to stop communism. We all want to retard or stop communism if we can, but we must be honest with ourselves and honest with the American people we represent. We cannot stop communism taking western Europe unless we have the power to stop Russia and her armies. We held a serious conference with a group of high-ranking military men while in Europe whose duty it is to know what Russia can and may do. We asked the question as follows: "Suppose, under the Marshall plan or some other plan, we spend from \$10,000,000,000 to \$20,000,000,000 rebuilding western Europe and get those countries going in good shape in 4 or 5 years, is there anything then to stop Russia from moving in and taking a much richer prize after we have spent our money to build it up?" The answer was "No" I do not believe any top military man in the Nation will make the statement that we can land and maintain in western Europe sufficient military forces to prevent Russia, if she so desires, from taking over western Europe. Germany will have no army. Italy, France, Belgium and Holland will have no military strength capable of putting up any serious resistance if Russia should make such a move. You just as well quit trying to deceive the American people by telling them you can stop communism if you put over the Marshall plan...

...We should kill the Marshall plan which provides that we enter into a 4-year 'contract with 16 nations to shore up their financial difficulties to the extent of some \$20,000,000,000. We should kill this plan because we cannot supply the food, oil, steel, and hundreds of other products that would be required.

...Now, if you want to exert the strongest influence possible by the United States to retard, or stop the encroachment of communism on western Europe, take some of these \$20,000,000,000 that you would waste in the Marshall plan, and spend them here at home in building the strongest air force with the greatest striking power of any air force in the world. Give more attention to cooperation in hemispheric defense with South America, strengthen our military departments where necessary to enable us in any emergency to strike promptly with power and effect. Mr. Stalin and his warlords, if they knew we were making such moves, would probably hesitate to move further into western Europe for fear they might precipitate a war with a powerful Nation that is pre-pared.

I would rather risk this course for the long pull future, and for the immediate effect it would have on Russia, than to tempt them by setting before them a \$20,000,000,000 banquet table through the Marshall plan of rebuilding western Europe. Force is the only thing Russia understands.

[I]f we weaken ourselves by shipping away our resources, causing the cost of living to go higher and higher, and spending our Nation into bankruptcy, such action will bring smiles and great satisfaction to Stalin, Molotov, and Russia. Twenty billion dollars spent on our part in western Europe now, plus the efforts of the European nations should be worth \$50,000,000,000 in a few years. It is too great a temptation to place before the Russian warlords...

The first responsibility of the Members of this Congress is to protect the interests of our own people and preserve the financial solvency of our own Nation. The greatest contribution we can make for the future peace of the world, is to keep America strong.