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Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie at the Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner

Edmund S. Muskie

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**JEFFERSON - JACKSON DAY DINNER
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE
MARCH 31, 1971**

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW HAS RECENTLY BEEN SAYING THAT I SPOKE UP
DECISIVELY THE OTHER DAY AND SET DECEMBER 31st AS THE DEADLINE
FOR THE END OF THE YEAR. IT'S TRUE. I HAD TO. OTHERWISE THE
ADMINISTRATION WOULD NEVER ADMIT THAT 1972 HAD ARRIVED. THAT
IS THE YEAR WHEN THE ADMINISTRATION WILL FINALLY HAVE TO FACE
THE NATION'S UNSOLVED PROBLEMS.

YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I WHAT AMERICA'S PROBLEMS ARE. THERE IS
URGENT NEED FOR BETTER HEALTH CARE, FOR A CLEANER ENVIRONMENT,
FOR EXPANDED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, FOR EQUAL JUSTICE, AND FOR A RE-
DUCTION IN CRIME AND VIOLENCE. WE MUST MEET THESE NEEDS.

THERE IS A STAGNANT ECONOMY. WE MUST REVIVE THAT ECONOMY.
WE MUST END THE JOBLESSNESS AND THE HIGHER PRICES WHICH MARK THE
NIXON ECONOMIC GAME PLAN.

THERE IS A TRAGIC WAR IN INDOCHINA. WE MUST END OUR INVOLVMENT
IN THAT WAR. WE MUST DO SO BY THE END OF THIS YEAR.

WE MUST BE READY TO MAKE THE ADMINISTRATION FACE ITS OWN FAILURES
IN 1972.

SO WE ARE HERE TONIGHT TO RAISE MONEY. THAT IS A NECESSARY PURPOSE.
AND WE ARE HERE TONIGHT TO LAUNCH A DEMOCRATIC COMEBACK IN THE
STATE OF DELAWARE. THAT IS ALSO A NECESSARY PURPOSE. AND WE ARE HERE
TONIGHT BECAUSE WE CARE.

WE NEED MORE THAN A PARTY VICTORY IN 1972 TO MEET AMERICA'S
AGENDA FOR TOMORROW. FOR WE CAN DO NONE OF THESE THINGS UNLESS
WE RESTORE THE TRUST AND CONFIDENCE WHICH THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION
HAS UNDERMINED BIT BY BIT. LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT I MEAN.

THE ADMINISTRATION CONTENDED IT WENT INTO CAMBODIA TO DESTROY
ENEMY HEADQUARTERS. THE HEADQUARTERS WERE NEVER FOUND.

THEN NEXT, THEY WENT INTO LAOS TO BLOCK THE HO CHI MIHN TRAIL
UNTIL THE RAINY SEASON IN MAY. THEY WERE DRIVEN OUT. IN EACH INSTANCE,
WHEN THE OPERATION DID NOT PROCEED ACCORDING TO PLAN, THE ADMINISTRATION
QUICKLY ADOPTED A NEW REASON FOR THE INVASION.

IT CALLS TO MIND THE INCIDENT OF THE MAN IN MAINE-- WHO WAS NOT

OVERLY BRIGHT -- WHO WAS FOUND ROAMING THE HILLS OF NEW ENGLAND WITH A LANTERN. SOMEONE ASKED HIM WHY HE WAS WALKING AROUND WITH THE LANTERN. HE SAID IT WAS TO KEEP THE ELEPHANTS AWAY. THE PEOPLE SAID, "THERE ARE NO ELEPHANTS IN NEW ENGLAND." THE MAN REPLIED, "IT SURE IS WORKING, ISN'T IT ?"

OR LOOK AT IT ANOTHER WAY. THE ADMINISTRATION CLAIMS A GREAT VICTORY IN LAOS. AS I HAVE READ THE REPORTS AND LOOKED AT THE PICTURES, THE THOUGHT OCCURED TO ME THAT WE CAN'T STAND MANY MORE "VICTORIES" LIKE THIS.

IT REMINDS ME OF THE REPORT THAT MARK TWAIN WROTE OF HIS ENCOUNTER WITH THE TOWN BULLY WHO WAS STRONGER AND BIGGER THAN HE. MARK TWAIN PUT IT THIS WAY, " THRUSTING MY EAR FIRMLY BETWEEN HIS TEETH, I THREW HIM HEAVILY TO THE GROUND ON TOP OF ME."

BUT YOU AND I KNOW THAT TRUST IN OUR GOVERNMENT IS NOT A LAUGHING MATTER. TRUST AND CONFIDENCE ARE NOT AS VISIBLE AS PEACE. THEY ARE NOT AS TANGIBLE AS PROSPERITY. BUT WITHOUT THEM, FREE PEOPLE CANNOT FIND A COMMON GROUND ON WHICH TO BUILD A BETTER LIFE.

FREE PEOPLE CANNOT FIND A COMMON GROUND UNLESS THEY KNOW THE FACTS, UNLESS THEY KNOW DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THOSE FACTS, AND UNLESS THEY HAVE A CHANCE TO DEBATE ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF DEALING WITH THOSE FACTS.

THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION, THE INFORMATION, THE RIGHT TO KNOW — THAT IS THE FOUNDATION OF A FREE SOCIETY. I AM CONCERNED BY WHAT THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION HAS DONE TO SHAKE THIS FOUNDATION.

I AM CONCERNED BY THE WAY THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION HAS CONTINUED TO ENGAGE IN THE SELLING OF A PRESIDENT. AND WHAT THEY ARE TRYING TO SELL IS ILLUSION, NOT REALITY.

TIME AFTER TIME, THE ADMINISTRATION HAS WITHHELD INFORMATION, AS IN THE CASE OF THE LAOS INVASION. TIME AFTER TIME, THE ADMINISTRATION SPOKESMEN HAVE HEAPED SCORN AND ABUSE ON THOSE WHO REPORT WHAT THE ADMINISTRATION DOES NOT LIKE TO HEAR.

WHEN WE SPEAK OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION, WE DO NOT MEAN THE FREEDOM OF GOVERNMENT ALONE OR EVEN THE MEDIA ALONE TO DECIDE WHAT IS TRUE OR FALSE, IMPORTANT OR UNIMPORTANT. WE MEAN THE

FREEDOM OF PEOPLE TO CHOOSE FOR THEMSELVES AMONG ALL THE OPINIONS AND ALL THE FACTS.

WHETHER THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION ACTS WITH THE VELVET GLOVE OF HERBERT KLEIN OR THE MAILED FIST OF SPIRO AGNEW, THE INTENT IS THE SAME.

THE INTENT IS TO LIMIT ACCESS TO INFORMATION.

WHAT ARE WE TO SAY TO THIS DELIBERATE AND PREMEDITATED ABRIDGEMENT OF OUR RIGHT TO KNOW? WE MUST SAY TO THIS ADMINISTRATION AS CLEARLY AS WE CAN: STOP TRYING TO MANAGE THE NEWS. STOP TRYING TO LIMIT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO ONE SIDE OF THE STORY.

WHATEVER THE ADMINISTRATION THINKS ABOUT "THE SELLING OF THE PENTAGON," ABOUT THE PRODUCTION OF THE EDITING, THAT PROGRAM PRESENTED MANY FACTS WHICH NO ONE HAS DISPUTED, FACTS WHICH THE PEOPLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO KNOW. THE ADMINISTRATION INSTEAD HAS CHALLENGED THE TECHNIQUES OF REPORTING RATHER THAN WHAT WAS REPORTED. THE PROGRAM SAID THE PENTAGON IS SPENDING MILLIONS ON PROPAGANDA, AND NO ONE IN THE WHITE HOUSE HAS DENIED IT -- OR DONE ANYTHING ABOUT IT.

TENS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS ARE SPENT EACH YEAR, NOT TO MAINTAIN OR IMPROVE OUR NATIONAL SECURITY, NOT TO INFORM THE PUBLIC OF FACTS THEY SHOULD KNOW, BUT TO PACKAGE AND SELL AN ADVERTISER'S IMAGE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE. THAT IMAGE SERVES NO DEFENSE PURPOSE AND NO DEFENSE INFORMATION PURPOSE.

THE PENTAGON SENDS COLONELS ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO LECTURE ON AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY. THE PENTAGON DISTRIBUTES MOVIES CONTAINING MORE PROPAGANDA THAN INFORMATION, MORE FANTASY THAN FACT. THE PENTAGON OFFERS TOURS TO INFLUENTIAL CIVILIANS, AND ROAD SHOWS WHERE VIOLENCE IS GLORIFIED TO AUDIENCES INCLUDING OUR CHILDREN.

THAT KIND OF CONDUCT IS WRONG. THE ADMINISTRATION SHOULD ADMIT IT IS WRONG. AND THE PENTAGON SHOULD STOP IT.

I HOLD NO SPECIAL BRIEF FOR CBS. NOR DO I ARGUE THAT ITS DOCUMENTARY WAS FLAWLESS. CHARGES OF UNFAIR EDITING CERTAINLY MERIT REVIEW AND CORRECTION WHERE APPROPRIATE. NEWSMEN MAKE MISTAKES AS DO POLITICIANS, AND BOTH SHOULD BE CRITICIZED WHEN IT HAPPENS. BUT WHAT IS IMPORTANT

IS NOT THIS NETWORK OR THAT DOCUMENTARY.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS OUR RIGHT AS A FREE PEOPLE TO THE CONTINUING FLOW OF INFORMATION, INCLUDING FACTS AND OPINION, FROM SOURCES THE PUBLIC CAN COMPARE. WHEN THIS ADMINISTRATION TRIES TO UNDERMINE THAT OPPORTUNITY, IT UNDERMINES PUBLIC TRUST IN THIS ADMINISTRATION.

ONLY TEN DAYS AGO, THE WHITE HOUSE " SUGGESTED" THAT THE DICK CAVETT SHOW INVITE AN ADMINISTRATION SPOKESMAN FOR THE SST. THEY ALSO "SUGGESTED" THAT NO ONE BE INVITED TO SPEAK FOR THE OTHER SIDE. THE WHITE HOUSE HAD NO BUSINESS DOING THAT.

IN BROADCASTING, THERE IS A REGULATION CALLED THE "FAIRNESS DOCTRINE." IT WAS ESTABLISHED TO PROVIDE CONTRASTING POINTS OF VIEW WITH A REASONABLE CHANCE TO BE HEARD. IT REQUIRES A PARTY WHO CALIMS UNFAIR TREATMENT TO FILE A COMPLAINT WITH THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION. AND IT REQUIRES A DECISION BY THAT COMMISSION AS TO WHETHER THE COMPLAINT IS JUSTIFIED.

THAT IS THE PROPER PROCEDURE. INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS MUST USE THAT PROCEDURE. BUT THIS ADMINISTRATION CHOSE TO OVERRIDE THAT PROCEDURE. THIS ADMINISTRATION CHOSE TO USE ITS POWER TO COERCE A NETWORK AND A PROGRAM'S PRODUCERS. I OBJECT TO THAT KIND OF INTIMIDATION. I DON'T THINK MR. CAVETT SHOULD BE BULLIED INTO BECOMING A PART OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS OPERATION.

I OBJECT AS WELL TO THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION'S MUZZLING OF THE BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS. THE CAREER CIVIL SERVANTS AT THE BUREAU ARE NOT THERE TO QUARREL WITH THE WHITE HOUSE OR THE SECRETARY OF LABOR. THEY ARE THERE TO ANALYZE AND MAKE PUBLIC THE FACTS, AND THEY HAVE DONE SO WITH GREAT OBJECTIVITY.

THEN WHY DID THE LABOR DEPARTMENT, LESS THAN TWO WEEKS AGO, ANNOUNCE AN END TO PUBLIC BRIEFINGS? THIS ADMINISTRATION KEEPS TELLING US IT HAS A GAME PLAN FOR THE ECONOMY. IF THAT IS SO, THEN WE HAVE A RIGHT TO HEAR FROM THE SCOREKEEPERS.

IF UNEMPLOYMENT IS UP, IF PRICES ARE UP, PEOPLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO KNOW, AND KNOW WHY. OPTIMISTIC FORECASTS ARE NO SUBSTITUTE FOR PLAIN FACTS.

THE DECISION TO MUZZLE THE BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS MUST BE REVERSED. IT WILL BE REVERSED BY A DEMOCRATIC ADMINISTRATION.

FOR ALMOST 200 YEARS, TENSION HAS EXISTED BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRATION IN POWER AND THOSE WHO REPORT THE NEWS. THAT TENSION IS A HEALTHY TENSION. IT SHOULD BE TO KEEP THE GOVERNMENT HONEST.

THOMAS JEFFERSON, WHOM WE HONOR TONIGHT, SAID: "WERE IT LEFT TO ME TO DECIDE WHETHER WE SHOULD HAVE GOVERNMENT WITHOUT NEWSPAPERS OR NEWSPAPERS WITHOUT GOVERNMENT, I SHOULD NOT HESITATE FOR A MOMENT TO PREFER THE LATTER."

AS A PRACTICING POLITICIAN WITHOUT MR. JEFFERSON'S GREAT WRITING SKILLS, I CANNOT BE SURE ABOUT HIS CHOICE. BUT UNDER THE GREAT PRINCIPLES THAT HE AND OUR OTHER FOUNDING FATHERS ESTABLISHED, WE NEED NOT MAKE THAT CHOICE. WE NEED BOTH A FREE GOVERNMENT AND A FREE PRESS.

NEITHER WOULD BE SAFE WITHOUT THE OTHER.

OF COURSE, THE MEDIA ARE NOT ALWAYS ACCURATE OR ALWAYS OBJECTIVE OR ALWAYS FAIR. NO ONE IS.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS THAT THEY BE FREE. TO BE FREE, TO PRESERVE THE RIGHT OF FREE CITIZENS TO OBTAIN THE TRUTH, THE MEDIA MUST REMAIN INDEPENDENT OF THOSE WHO WOULD ONLY ADVANCE THEIR OWN NARROW INTERESTS. BUT WE MUST ALSO KEEP THEM FREE FROM GOVERNMENT INTIMIDATION, ATTACK, AND CONTROL.

IF THIS ADMINISTRATION THINKS IT CAN KEEP THE NEWS MEDIA SILENT, IT IS WRONG. IF THIS ADMINISTRATION THINKS IT CAN KEEP A MAJORITY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE SILENT, IT IS WRONG. IF THIS ADMINISTRATION THINKS IT CAN KEEP THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY SILENT, IT IS WRONG.

THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS OFTEN SAID LET'S TALK ABOUT WHAT'S RIGHT WITH AMERICA. THE FREEDOM TO REPORT WHAT'S WRONG — THAT'S WHAT'S RIGHT WITH AMERICA. THE FREEDOM TO POINT OUT WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE — THAT'S WHAT'S RIGHT WITH AMERICA. THE FREEDOM TO AROUSE THE PUBLIC SO THAT

THEIR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES WILL GET THINGS DONE — THAT'S WHAT'S RIGHT WITH AMERICA.

THAT'S WHAT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY HAS REPRESENTED FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY AND A HALF, SINCE THE TIME OF JEFFERSON AND JACKSON. WE AREN'T AFRAID OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. WE AREN'T AFRAID TO TELL THEM THE TRUTH. WE AREN'T AFRAID TO GIVE THEM OUR TRUST AND OUR CONFIDENCE.

I BELIEVE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE CAPABLE OF UNDERSTANDING REASONED DEBATE OVER THE FUTURE OF AMERICA. I BELIEVE OUR PEOPLE SHOULD BE TOLD THE TRUTH ABOUT THE HARD CHOICES AHEAD. I BELIEVE, IF AMERICANS ARE PRESENTED WITH DIFFICULT POLICIES FOR OUR FUTURE, THEY WILL CHOOSE WISELY AND DECENTLY. I THINK AMERICANS WANT AN ADMINISTRATION TO PRESENT A PROGRAM VIGOROUSLY AND TO MOBILIZE SUPPORT FOR THAT PROGRAM, BUT THEY DO NOT WANT CAMPAIGN CLICHES AND POLITICAL HOMILIES, LATER TO BE JUSTIFIED WITH A DISTORTION OF THE NEWS, ATTACKS ON THE PRESS, AND A CAMPAIGN OF FEAR.

I THINK AMERICANS ARE READY FOR LEADERS WHO TRUST THEIR JUDGEMENT.

I THINK AMERICANS ARE READY FOR LEADERSHIP THAT CAN PRESENT A REASONED COHERENT PROGRAM, ONE THAT RECOGNIZES THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED, BUT APPEALS TO THE VISION AND DECENCY OF OUR NATION. WE ARE ALL TIRED OF ENDLESS VERBAL MANEUVERING THAT REFLECTS NO POLICIES, ONLY A CALCULUS OF RE-ELECTION.

MOST IMPORTANT, I BELIEVE AMERICA WANTS LEADERS WHO WILL APPEAL

TO WHAT IS BEST IN ALL OF US. WE NEED LEADERS TO INSPIRE US, TO GIVE US VISION. FOR AMERICANS KNOW THAT OUR COUNTRY IS NOT GREAT WHEN WE ACT UPON OUR FEARS OR DIVIDE OUR NATION FOR IMMEDIATE POLITICAL GAIN.

YOU AND I ARE HERE TONIGHT BECAUSE WE BELIEVE OUR PARTY CAN REPRESENT THE PEOPLE. WE BELIEVE BY RESPECTING THE PEOPLE, BY LISTENING TO THEIR HOPES AND THEIR HEARTBEAT, WE CAN BEGIN TO RESTORE THEIR TRUST AND THEIR CONFIDENCE. WE BELIEVE WE CAN START SOLVING AMERICA'S PROBLEMS.

WE DEMOCRATS HAVE A SOLEMN RESPONSIBILITY. STATED SIMPLY, IT IS TO REVERSE THE UNHEALTHY, THE UNFORTUNATE AND THE UNDEMOCRATIC TRENDS OF THE LAST TWO YEARS.

WE MUST BRING TRUTH -- WHERE THERE HAS BEEN UNTRUTH .

WE MUST BRING TRUST -- WHERE THERE HAS BEEN DISTRUST.

WE MUST BRING DISCLOSURE -- WHERE THERE HAS BEEN CONCEALMENT.

IN SHORT -- WE MUST BRING SUCCESS -- WHERE THERE HAS BEEN FAILURE.

THESE ENDS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED BY THE RETURN TO POWER, IN 1972, OF THE PARTY WHICH CAN HEAL THE SCARS OF DISSENSION, WHICH CAN BIND THE WOUNDS OF BITTERNESS, AND WHICH CAN RESTORE TO HEALTH THE FAITH OF A PEOPLE.

THESE ENDS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED BY THE PARTY OF HOPE, THE PARTY OF TRUST, THE PARTY OF PROMISE -- THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY.