

Bates College

SCARAB

Speeches

Edmund S. Muskie Papers

4-24-1971

The Democratic System - Remarks at the Jefferson-Jackson Dinner, Lincoln, Nebraska

Edmund S. Muskie

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scarab.bates.edu/msp>

REMARKS BY SENATOR EDUMUND S. MUSKIE
JEFFERSON-JACKSON DINNER, LINCOLN,
NEBRASKA, SATURDAY, 24 APRIL 1971

IT IS A LONG WAY FROM THE ROCKY COAST OF MAINE
TO THE PLAINS OF NEBRASKA. BUT THERE IS NO GREAT DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN THE PEOPLE OF OUR STATES. IN OUR TWO STATES -- AS
IN THE OTHER FORTY-EIGHT -- I BELIEVE MOST AMERICANS WANT
THE SAME THING FROM THEIR COUNTRY.

WE ALL WANT TO WALK SAFELY ON ANY STREET, IN ANY
NEIGHBORHOOD OF ANY COMMUNITY.

WE ALL WANT TO BE TREATED FAIRLY AND WITH RESPECT,
NO MATTER WHAT THE COLOR OF OUR SKIN, OR THE SPELLING OF
OUR LAST NAME.

WE ALL WANT THE RIGHT TO EARN A DECENT LIVING IN
A DECENT JOB IN A GROWING AND HEALTHY ECONOMY.

WE ALL WANT GOOD HEALTH CARE AT A REASONABLE
COST.

WE ALL WANT DECENT HOUSING, AND A CLEANER
ENVIRONMENT, AND BETTER TRANSPORTATION.

WE ALL WANT OUR CHILDREN TO HAVE AN EQUAL CHANCE
TO REACH THEIR OWN POTENTIAL.

WE WANT TO END THE SCOURGE OF POVERTY AND HUNGER.

WE WANT OUR NATION TO BE A RESPECTED FORCE FOR
PEACE IN THE WORLD.

~~THESE ARE THE THINGS MEN AND WOMEN ARE CONCERNED
WITH IN EVERY SECTION OF THIS COUNTRY. THESE ARE THE THINGS
THEY WANT THEIR GOVERNMENT TO BE CONCERNED WITH.~~

OUR GOALS SEEM VERY CLEAR.

OUR CAPACITY TO ACHIEVE THEM IS LESS CLEAR. WE
HAVE FALLEN SHORT SO OFTEN IN THE PAST MORE AND MORE AMERICANS
WONDER IF THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM HAS BROKEN DOWN.

~~TOO MANY AMERICANS DOUBT THAT OUR DEMOCRACY~~

~~CAN WORK.~~

I SOMETIMES WORRY ABOUT THE CAPACITY OF OUR COUNTRY TO SURVIVE AS A DEMOCRACY. I WORRY WHEN I HEAR THE SHRILL VOICES OF REPRESSION RAISED AGAINST A FREE PRESS AND OUR YOUNG PEOPLE. I WORRY WHEN I HEAR TESTIMONY ABOUT MILITARY ESPIONAGE ON PRIVATE CITIZENS AND ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES. I WORRY WHEN I DISCOVER THAT EARTH DAY RALLIES ARE SUBJECT TO FBI SURVEILLANCE. I WORRY WHEN THE MECHANISMS OF DEFENSE ARE TURNED AGAINST THE CONSTITUTION, THE FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY.

THESE ACTIONS REINFORCE THE UNCERTAINTY OF CITIZENS ABOUT THEIR GOVERNMENT, WHICH IS SUPPOSED TO PROTECT THEM. ^{THEY} ~~THESE ACTIONS~~ BREED FEAR. THEY BREED DISRESPECT. THEY BREED SUSPICION AND DISTRUST IN PLACE OF OPENNESS AND HONESTY. ~~THEY BREED FEAR.~~ THEY UNDERMINE

IN EACH OTHER.
OUR CONFIDENCE ~~AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS A NATION.~~

IF AMERICANS ARE TO HAVE CONFIDENCE IN EACH
OTHER, THEY MUST HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THEIR LEADERS. ~~TO~~

~~HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THEIR LEADERS,~~ **THEY** AMERICANS MUST KNOW

WHERE THEIR LEADERS PROPOSE TO LEAD THEM, AND THEY MUST

THEY
KNOW THAT THEY ARE LEADING. AMERICANS MUST FEEL THAT THOSE

LEADERS UNDERSTAND THE GOALS OF THEIR PEOPLE.

~~NO ISSUE HAS UNDERMINED PUBLIC
IN INDOCHINA THE ONLY JUST GOAL IS AN END TO THE
CONFIDENCE MORE THAN THE WAR IN
FIGHTING AND KILLING. WE CANNOT BEGIN TO DO THAT UNTIL WE
INDOCHINA. AMERICANS EVERYWHERE YEARN
ANNOUNCE A DATE FOR OUR WITHDRAWAL. I BELIEVE THAT DATE
FOR A CLEARCUT AND DEFINITE COMMITMENT
CAN AND SHOULD BE NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 31, 1971.
TO END OUR INVOLVEMENT IN THAT WAR.~~

~~BUT THE PRESIDENT TELLS
ADMINISTRATION SPOKESMEN HAVE TOLD US THAT A FIXED~~

DATE FOR WITHDRAWAL WILL TEAR THE COUNTRY APART. I SAY THAT

A FIXED DATE WILL GIVE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE SOME CONFIDENCE

THAT THEIR LEADERS DO INTEND A NEW BEGINNING FOR AMERICAN

THEY
FOREIGN POLICY. ~~AMERICANS~~ COULD HAVE A NEW CONFIDENCE
THAT WE INTEND TO USE OUR POWER, NOT TO IMPOSE OUR WILL
THROUGH FORCE OF ARMS, BUT TO LEND A HELPING HAND FOR
JUSTICE AND PEACE. ~~THE KILLING OF AMERICANS AND ASIANS~~
~~MUST STOP. HONOR LIES IN RECOGNIZING SENSELESS DESTRUCTION,~~
~~NOT CONTINUING OUR PART IN IT.~~

~~THOSE OF US WHO CALL FOR PEACE DO NOT SEEK TO~~
~~WITHDRAW FROM THE WORLD. WE WANT TO HELP BUILD IT, NOT TO~~
~~DESTROY IT.~~

THEY WOULD BE REASSURED THAT WE
WILL, AT LONG LAST,
~~WE WANT TO~~ TURN OUR ENERGIES TO THOSE TASKS

WHICH GIVE HOPE, NOT DESPAIR, ~~WE WANT TO TURN OUR SIGHTS~~

TO GOALS WHICH UNITE, ^{US} NOT DIVIDE. ^{US} ~~WE WANT TO CREATE NEW~~

~~OPPORTUNITIES, NOT SETTLE OLD SCORES.~~

~~THEY COULD HAVE A NEW CONFIDENCE~~
~~WE WANT TO HEAL THIS SOCIETY, BECAUSE WE CARE~~
AMERICANS KNOW THAT THE ECONOMIC
ABOUT ITS PEOPLE. PROBLEMS WE FACE - UNEMPLOYMENT
INFLATION, DECLINING INCOMES - ARE DIRECTLY
RELATED TO THAT WAR.

~~IF I HAVE ANY COMPLAINT ABOUT THE NIXON~~

~~ADMINISTRATION, IT IS THIS. THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION~~

~~SHOWS NO SIGN THAT IT REALLY CARES ABOUT PEOPLE.~~

~~THE~~ ~~OF THIS ADMINISTRATION~~
FOR TWENTY-SEVEN MONTHS WE HAVE BEEN HEARING

ABOUT THE NIXON GAME PLAN FOR THE ECONOMY.

WHAT ARE
AND THE RESULTS
I HAVE SEEN

~~OF THAT NIXON GAME PLAN?~~

~~NO PLAN. I HAVE SEEN SOME REACTIONS. AND I HAVE SEEN GAMES~~

~~PLAYED WITH THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.~~

~~WE~~
YOU AND I HAVE SEEN UNEMPLOYMENT GO UP, PRICES

GO UP, AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES GO DOWN.

WHEN UNEMPLOYMENT IN LINCOLN GOES UP FORTY PERCENT
AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN OMAHA GOES UP OVER SIXTY PERCENT IN TWO
YEARS, THAT'S NOT A GAME. IT'S NOT A GAME WHEN 4500 MORE

MEN AND WOMEN ARE LOOKING FOR JOBS IN THOSE TWO CITIES.

IT'S VETERANS COMING HOME FROM VIETNAM WITH NOTHING TO DO
WHEN THEY GET HERE. IT'S FAMILIES GOING ON RELIEF, NOT

BECAUSE THEY WANT TO, BUT BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO.

WHEN FARMERS ARE GETTING SEVENTY PERCENT OF
PARITY FOR THEIR CROPS, THAT'S NOT A GAME. WHEN TWO
THOUSAND FAMILY FARMERS A YEAR ARE GOING OUT OF BUSINESS
IN NEBRASKA, THAT'S NOT A GAME. IT'S FARMERS LOSING
NEARLY A BILLION DOLLARS IN INCOME FOR ONE YEAR. IT'S
YOUNG PEOPLE GOING TO THE CITIES, SEARCHING FOR JOBS THAT
AREN'T THERE. IT'S SMALL TOWNS, LOSING THEIR POPULATION,
FACED WITH HIGHER PROPERTY TAXES AND A BLEAK FUTURE.

I DON'T PRETEND TO HAVE THE ANSWER TO OUR FARM
PROBLEM; BUT I DO KNOW THAT WHAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAS
OFFERED IS THE WRONG ANSWER.

ANY FARM POLICY WHICH DRIVES FARM PRICES DOWN,
WHILE THE COST OF FARMING IS GOING UP, IS THE WRONG ANSWER.

ANY FARM POLICY WHICH DRIVES FARMERS OFF THE
LAND, AND YOUNG PEOPLE OUT OF RURAL COMMUNITIES IS THE
WRONG ANSWER.

ANY FARM POLICY WHICH FAILS TO GIVE FARMERS
REAL BARGAINING POWER IN THE MARKETPLACE IS THE WRONG
ANSWER.

AMERICA HAS A STAKE IN WHAT HAPPENS TO FARMERS
AND THEIR FAMILIES. FARMERS HAVE A RIGHT TO A FAIR RETURN
ON THEIR TIME AND THEIR INVESTMENT. THEY HAVE A RIGHT TO
BE REWARDED FOR THEIR EFFICIENCY.

~~THEY HAVE A RIGHT TO EXPECT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY
TO DO MORE THAN CRITICIZE THE REPUBLICANS.~~

WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO FIND BETTER ANSWERS THAN
WE HAVE IN THE PAST FOR THE PROBLEMS OF MEETING OUR FOOD
AND FIBER NEEDS, ENCOURAGING EFFICIENCY ON THE FARM,
INSURING A FAIR RETURN FOR FARMERS, AND BUILDING HEALTHY
RURAL COMMUNITIES. SUCH AN APPROACH CANNOT BE CARRIED OUT
IN A VACUUM. IT IS ROOTED IN NATIONAL ECONOMIC POLICIES
AIMED AT MEETING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE IN ALL PARTS OF OUR
COUNTRY.

NEEDS TO BE DONE - THE WORK OF PEACE -
THE WORK OF BUILDING LIVES, AND SMALL TOWNS,
AND GREAT CITIES. IT IS TIME WE UNDERSTOOD

~~GAINS FOR THE DEMOCRATS IN LETTING THIS ADMINISTRATION~~
WE DO NOT NEED WAR TO PROSPER. WE NEED
~~CONTINUE TO MISMANAGE THE ECONOMY. THERE MIGHT BE, BUT~~
PEACE.

~~I DON'T THINK THE COUNTRY CAN AFFORD IT. THE TIME TO TURN~~

~~THE ECONOMY AROUND IS NOT, NOT 1972 OR 1973.~~

NOW IS THE TIME TO PUT PEOPLE TO WORK BUILDING
HOMES AND SCHOOLS.

NOW IS THE TIME TO GIVE OUR YOUNG MEN A CHANCE
TO BUILD A BETTER AMERICA, NOT KEEP THEM TIED DOWN IN THE
JUNGLES OF INDOCHINA.

NOW IS THE TIME TO GIVE AMERICANS A BIGGER
OPPORTUNITY TO USE THEIR GOD-GIVEN TALENTS, TO LIVE IN
DECENT HOUSING, TO SEE THEIR CHILDREN LEARN IN BETTER
SCHOOLS, TO KNOW THEIR PARENTS CAN GET BETTER MEDICAL CARE
WITHOUT GOING BANKRUPT, TO LIVE IN ATTRACTIVE COMMUNITIES
WHERE THEY AREN'T AFRAID TO WALK THE STREETS.

~~IF THE AMERICAN DREAM MEANS ANYTHING, IT MEANS
A JOB OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERY MAN AND WOMAN WILLING AND
ABLE TO WORK. IT MEANS A SHARE IN A GROWING ECONOMY FOR
EVERY AMERICAN. THAT'S THE GOAL OF ANY POLITICAL PARTY
WORTHY OF THE NAME. THAT'S MY GOAL.~~

WHEN FARMERS SUFFER; WHEN BLUE COLLAR WORKERS
AND WHITE COLLAR WORKERS IN AMERICA SUFFER, THEN AMERICA
SUFFERS. WE CAN'T LICK HARD-CORE UNEMPLOYMENT IN A WEAK
ECONOMY. WE CAN'T EDUCATE OUR CHILDREN THE WE'D LIKE,
OR GIVE AN EQUAL CHANCE TO EVERYONE, OR CLEAN UP POLLUTION,
OR IMPROVE LAW ENFORCEMENT, OR REBUILD OUR CITIES, UNLESS
THE ECONOMY IS GROWING AND PEOPLE HAVE JOBS.

WE CANNOT REALLY DO THIS JOB
~~THAT'S WHY WE NEED A GOVERNMENT WHICH CARES,~~
UNLESS AND UNTIL WE END THIS
~~NOT ABOUT WHAT IT CALLS THE SILENT MAJORITY, BUT ABOUT A~~
~~WORKING MAJORITY.~~
DESTRUCTIVE WAR.

- 11 -

~~FUTURE, AS I SAID EARLIER, IS AN EIGHTY BILLION
DOLLAR MILITARY BUDGET.~~

~~I AM NOT PROPOSING THAT WE ELIMINATE OR
CUT DOWN ON OUR DEFENSES WITHOUT REGARD TO WORLD
CONDITIONS.~~

SAYING

WHAT I AM ~~SUGGESTING~~ IS THAT THE WAY TO
BEGIN IS BY GETTING OUT OF THE QUICKSAND OF VIETNAM.

BUT I READ THAT THE PRESIDENT SAYS THAT
PEOPLE WHO TAKE THIS POSITION ARE ACTUALLY FOSTERING
A NEW FORM OF ISOLATIONISM.

THE PRESIDENT HAS DEFENDED HIS POSITION IN
~~VIETNAM BY SAYING THAT AMERICA MUST NOT RETREAT FROM~~
THE WORLD. ALSO, HE HAS SAID WE HAVE IMPORTANT
RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE PEACE THAT WE CANNOT SPURN
OR SHIRK.

I HAVE NO TROUBLE IN ACCEPTING THE POSITION
THAT THE UNITED STATES IS PART OF THE WORLD AND THAT
WE HAVE THE STRONGEST OBLIGATIONS TO THE KEEPING OF
THE PEACE. BUT I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW
INTELLIGENT AND HUMANE OPPOSITION TO THE WAR IN
VIETNAM FITS IN WITH ANY REASONABLE DEFINITION OF
ISOLATIONISM.

I BELIEVE THAT THE OPPOSITION OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO THE CONTINUATION OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM -- I BELIEVE THAT THEIR OPPOSITION TO AN EXTENSION OR ESCALATION OF THAT WAR -- HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ISOLATIONISM.

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO ACCEPT THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES TO OTHER PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, BUT THEY DO NOT BELIEVE THAT WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING IN VIETNAM, CAMBODIA, OR LAOS, IS A PROPER EXERCISE OF THAT WORLD RESPONSIBILITY.

I DON'T BELIEVE IT IS ISOLATIONIST TO PROTEST THE DROPPING OF BOMBS ON VILLAGES.

I DON'T BELIEVE IT IS ISOLATIONIST TO PROTEST THE MANIPULATION OF OTHER GOVERNMENTS.

I DON'T BELIEVE IT IS ISOLATIONIST TO PROTEST A POLICY THAT DECLARES OUR RESPECT FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION YET PROCEEDS TO VIOLATE THAT PRINCIPLE.

I DON'T THINK IT IS ISOLATIONIST TO PROTEST A MILITARY BUDGET OF EIGHTY BILLION DOLLARS - A BUDGET WHICH COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS HAVE REPEATEDLY CRITICIZED BECAUSE OF GROSS MISSPENDING, WASTE, AND INCOMPETENCE.

I DON'T THINK IT IS ISOLATIONIST TO PROTEST AN ECONOMIC POLICY THAT FINDS READY DOLLARS FOR ALL SORTS OF MILITARY NEEDS WHICH IT REGARDS AS VITAL TO OUR SECURITY BUT THAT DOESN'T REGARD SQUALOR, SUFFERING, HOMELESSNESS, AND JOBLESSNESS AMONG AMERICAN CITIZENS AS ANY THREAT TO OUR SECURITY OR WELL-BEING.

I DON'T THINK IT IS ISOLATIONIST TO PROTEST INJUSTICE AND TO INSIST THAT TRUE SECURITY CAN COME ONLY WHEN EVERY AMERICAN HAS AN EQUAL CHANCE.

I DON'T THINK IT IS ISOLATIONIST TO OPPOSE THE IDEA THAT THE UNITED STATES CAN ACT AS A WORLD POLICEMAN, KEEPING ORDER EVERYWHERE BY ITSELF.

I'M NOT OPPOSED TO AMERICAN COMMITMENTS IN THE WORLD BUT I CONFESS I HAVE SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT COMMITMENTS IN MIND FROM THE ONES THE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN TALKING ABOUT.

I'D LIKE TO SEE THE UNITED STATES MAKE A COMMITMENT TO A STRONGER UNITED NATIONS - A UNITED NATIONS THAT HAS THE ABILITY TO KEEP THE PEACE ON A WORLD SCALE.

I'D LIKE TO SEE THE UNITED STATES MAKE A COMMITMENT TO A WORLD UNDER LAW - ELIMINATING ANARCHY AMONG NATIONS, PUTTING AN END TO THE WORLD ARMS RACE.

I'D LIKE TO SEE THE UNITED STATES MAKE A COMMITMENT TO THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD'S RESOURCES IN THE HUMAN INTEREST.

I'D LIKE TO SEE THE UNITED STATES MAKE A COMMITMENT TO WORK WITH ALL OTHER NATIONS TO KEEP THE WORLD'S OCEANS FROM BEING POISONED, AND TO PROTECT OUR ATMOSPHERE.

I'D LIKE TO SEE THE UNITED STATES COMMIT ALL ITS MORAL POWER TO THE IDEA THAT A CONDITION OF SANITY AND SAFETY CAN BE CREATED ON EARTH SO THAT MAN NEITHER HAS TO KILL OR BE KILLED.

I'D LIKE, IN SHORT, TO SEE US MAKE INSPIRING COMMITMENTS TO A PLANET MADE SAFE AND FIT FOR THE HUMAN FAMILY.

THIS WORLD AND EVERYTHING IN IT BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE WHO INHABIT IT. I CAN IMAGINE NO COMMITMENT THAT WOULD GIVE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE A DEEPER SENSE OF IDENTITY WITH THEIR OWN HISTORY THAN A COMMITMENT TO HELP LIFT THE INSANE BURDEN OF WAR FROM THE WORLD'S

15
~~14~~

PEOPLES, AND TO HELP UPGRADE THE PROSPECTS OF THE
HUMAN FAMILY FOR A DECENT AND JUST EXISTENCE.

THESE ARE THE KIND OF COMMITMENTS THAT
MAKE SENSE IN OUR TIME. THESE ARE THE COMMITMENTS
THAT I'M GOING TO CONTINUE TO TALK ABOUT AND WORK FOR.

ELBERT HUBBARD ONCE DESCRIBED AN EDITOR AS "A PERSON EMPLOYED ON A ~~NEW~~ NEWSPAPER WHOSE BUSINESS IT IS TO SEPARATE THE WHEAT FROM THE CHAFF, AND TO SEE THAT THE CHAFF IS PRINTED."

WE HAVE MUCH IN COMMON. THE DIFFERENCE IS THAT WE SOMETIMES WRITE IT INTO LAW.

JOURNALISM CONSISTS IN BUYING WHITE PAPER AT TWO CENTS A POUND AND SELLING IT AT 10 CENTS A POUND.

WE DO SOMETHING SIMILAR AND CALL IT LAWMAKING.