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Edmund S. Muskie Papers

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Remarks of Senator Edmund S. Muskie Before the Florida House of Representatives

Edmund S. Muskie

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REMARKS BY SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 27, 1971

IT HAS TAKEN ME TWENTY-FIVE YEARS TO TRAVEL FROM A SEAT IN THE MAINE HOUSE TO A PODIUM IN THE FLORIDA HOUSE. EVEN LAWTON CHILES MIGHT APPRECIATE THE SHOE LEATHER THAT'S COST ME.

SO I APPRECIATE YOUR INVITATION.

LAST THURSDAY IN WASHINGTON, A GROUP OF YOUNG VIETNAM WAR VETERANS

VISITED MY OFFICE. THEY WERE FROM MAINE, AND THEY ASKED ME TO WALK WITH THEM DOWN TO THE MALL, WHERE THEY HAD BEEN STAYING WITH HUNDREDS OF FELLOW VETERANS FROM ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY.

THESE YOUNG MEN HAD ALREADY SPENT SEVERAL COLD AND WINDY NIGHTS ON THE GROUND, ONLY BLOCKS FROM THE CAPITOL AND THE WHITE HOUSE. I LISTENED TO THESE MEN. THEY HAD COME TO WASHINGTON FOR A PURPOSE, TO TELL US WHAT THEY FELT ABOUT THE WAR, WHAT IT HAD DONE TO THEM, WHAT IT HAD DONE TO OTHERS IN UNIFORM, WHAT IT HAD DONE TO THE PEOPLE OF VIETNAM, WHAT THEY SAW IT DOING HERE, TO THE COUNTRY THEY LOVE.

THEY BORE A PAINFUL AND NOBLE WITNESS TO THE AGONY OF AMERICA, TO THE

- 2 -

TRAGEDY OF THESE LONG AND DIFFICULT YEARS. THEIR SACRIFICE, AND THE SACRIFICE OF ALL THE FINE YOUNG MEN WHO FOUGHT IN THE DISTANT LANDS OF INDOCHINA, WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN.

AND IF ANYTHING LESS THAN HONOR WAS BROUGHT TO WASHINGTON LAST WEEK, IT WAS NOT BECAUSE OF THESE YOUNG VETERANS BUT BECAUSE OF THOSE WHO SOUGHT TO EVICT THEM AND TO SILENCE THEIR VOICES.

THESE VETERANS SAID WHAT I HAVE HEARD IN A GROWING CHORUS, IN EVERY REGION AND EVERY STATE I HAVE VISITED IN THESE LAST 2-1/2 YEARS.

THEY SAID, "END THE WAR." AND THEY ARE RIGHT.

END THE WAR, SO WE CAN GET ON WITH BUILDING A STRONG AND A DECENT SOCIETY HERE IN AMERICA. END THE WAR, SO WE CAN MAKE LIFE WORTH LIVING AND WORKING FOR, HERE IN AMERICA.

AMERICANS YOUNG AND OLD WANT THE SAME THINGS FROM THEIR COUNTRY.

WE ALL WANT THE RIGHT TO WALK WITHOUT FEAR ON ANY STREET IN ANY NEIGHBORHOOD OF ANY COMMUNITY. AND WE CAN WORK TOGETHER TO DEFEND THAT RIGHT, IN A TIME OF PEACE.

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

THAT RIGHT, IN A TIME OF PEACE.

WE ALL WANT THE RIGHT TO BE TREATED FAIRLY AND WITH RESPECT, NO

MATTER WHAT COLOR WE ARE OR WHAT OUR LAST NAME HAPPENS TO BE. AND

WE CAN WORK TOGETHER TO GUARANTEE THAT RIGHT, IN A TIME OF PEACE.

THESE ARE WHAT WE MEAN BY NATIONAL PRIORITIES. THESE ARE THE THINGS

MEN AND WOMEN CARE ABOUT, IN MAINE, AND IN FLORIDA. THESE ARE THE

THINGS PEOPLE WANT THEIR GOVERNMENT TO CARE ABOUT, IN ALL PARTS OF

THE COUNTRY. AND WE CAN TURN TO THESE THINGS WITH ALL OUR ENERGIES,

IF WE MAKE THE CHOICE TO DO SO.

THE UNFINISHED TASKS WE FACE AS A NATION ARE ENORMOUS. YOU ARE

CONCERNED WITH IMPORTANT AND CRITICAL NATIONAL QUESTIONS OF REVENUE

SHARING, OF WELFARE REFORM, OF THE NEED FOR ADEQUATE FUNDING OF

GRANTS-IN-AID.

I BELIEVE CONGRESS MUST ADDRESS ITSELF TO THESE QUESTIONS, THIS YEAR.

AND I PLAN TO INTRODUCE A REVENUE SHARING MEASURE IN A MATTER OF

DAYS, WHICH I HOPE WILL MERIT YOUR ATTENTION AND SUPPORT.

BUT NO MATTER HOW WE MAY DIFFER ON THE BEST OR FASTEST WAY OF MEETING

THE FISCAL CRISIS IN OUR STATES AND CITIES, THIS MUCH IS CLEAR. WE

MUST STOP POURING OUR RESOURCES INTO A WAR WE MUST END. HOW MUCH WE COULD DO WITH THE 27 MILLION DOLLARS A DAY THIS WAR COSTS US.

HOW MUCH WE COULD DO TO PROVIDE GOOD HEALTH CARE, AND MORE ADEQUATE HOUSING, AND A CLEANER ENVIRONMENT, AND BETTER SCHOOLS AND IMPROVED TRANSPORTATION.

AMERICA IS A GREAT COUNTRY, NOT BECAUSE OF THE WARS SHE HAS FOUGHT OR THE BATTLES SHE HAS WON. AMERICA IS A GREAT COUNTRY BECAUSE OF THE DECENCY AND THE GOOD SENSE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

~~AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE DECENT ENOUGH AND SENSIBLE ENOUGH TO KNOW~~
WE MUST PUT THIS WAR BEHIND US.

I BELIEVE WE HAVE TIME TO GIVE LIFE TO OUR CITIES AND OUR RURAL COMMUNITIES, BUT THE TIME IS NOW. I BELIEVE WE CAN SAVE OUR CHILDREN AND GIVE THEM PURPOSE AND HOPE IN A MORE POSITIVE FUTURE. THAT'S THE GOAL. WHEN ALL OUR MEN HAVE COME HOME AGAIN, THAT'S THE GOAL.

AND IT'S A JOURNEY WE ALL CAN TAKE.