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Press Release - Muskie Introduces Measures to stop Drilling in Santa Barbara Channel

Edmund S. Muskie

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4202 NEW SENATE OFFICE BLDG
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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MUSKIE INTRODUCES MEASURES TO STOP DRILLING
IN SANTA BARBARA CHANNEL

Senator Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) re-introduced today bills to close down permanently all oil drilling in the Santa Barbara Channel and to set up a program for designating parts of the nation's beaches, marshes, tidelands, and coastal zones as marine preserves.

"The people of Santa Barbara believe that it may take years to relieve the oil pressure in the channel," the Maine Democrat said, "I agree with them that the schedule for drilling and pumping of oil in the area should not be determined by the oil companies holding leases there."

The Senator noted that a draft statement published by the U. S. Geological Survey on February 23 did not discuss the environmental impact of production platform drilling in the channel. The draft dealt only with exploratory drilling.

"Of what use is an environmental impact statement on exploratory drilling?" Senator Muskie said. "We need to know, we must know, what the effects of production platform drilling are going to be."

Speaking of his marine preserves bill, the Senator said he is concerned "with the anomalous manner in which we are attempting to conserve and protect the nation's beaches, marshes, tidelands, coastal zones, and ocean resources."

"At this moment," he said, "we have no way of setting aside portions of the tidelands and the Outer Continental Shelf for research, recreation, and other specific purposes. But oil leaks and spills continue; coastal land sales make banner headlines."

"With respect to beaches and wetlands," Senator Muskie continued, "we seem to be of two, opposing minds. In some areas, we put strict limits upon the use of these resources, permitting no development of any kind. In other areas, we allow frank and open exploitation for private ends."

The Senator's bill to close down drilling in the Santa Barbara Channel would require the Interior Secretary to assume control and management of Platform A and to take whatever action is necessary to prevent more blowouts and to stop seepage.

On January 29, 1969, a blowout occurred on Platform A operated by Union Oil Company of California in the Santa Barbara Channel. The well was brought under control on February 8, 1969.

Senator Muskie's bill to set up a program for marine preserves would direct the Interior Secretary to enter into agreements with State and local governments on regulations concerning the use of such areas designated by the Congress.
