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Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie Before the I.L.G.W.U. Convention

Edmund S. Muskie

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SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE'S

REMARKS BEFORE I.L.C.W.U. CONVENTION

MIAMI, FLORIDA 5/7/71

IN READING MY PRESS CLIPPINGS, I AM REMINDED THAT I HAVE AN OCCASIONAL TEMPER AND THAT I TEND TO BE IMPATIENT. THIS DESCRIPTION, I HASTEN TO ASSURE YOU, IS ENTIRELY ACCURATE. THERE ARE SOME THINGS I AM ANGRY ABOUT, JUST AS THERE ARE SOME THINGS I GET IMPATIENT ABOUT. AND I LIKE TO THINK THAT THESE ARE THE THINGS I HAVE IN COMMON WITH THE ILGWU.

FOR MORE THAN 70 YEARS, YOUR ORGANIZATION HASN'T HESITATED TO EXPRESS INDIGNATION AND IMPATIENCE WITH SOCIAL INJUSTICE IN ALL ITS FORMS. YOU HAVE BEEN ANGRY AND IMPATIENT GOING ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE TIME WHEN NEW IMMIGRANTS WERE DENIED THE RIGHTS ENJOYED BY OTHER CITIZENS. YOU HAVE BEEN ANGRY AND IMPATIENT OVER THE DENIAL OF FAIR WORKING CONDITIONS FOR WOMEN. YOU WERE INDIGNANT ABOUT CHILD LABOR AND ABOUT THE EXPLOITATION OF LABOR IN GENERAL.

I AM PROUD TO HAVE BEEN ANGRY AND IMPATIENT ABOUT THE SAME THINGS. AND, LIKE YOU, I AM STILL IMPATIENT.

THE ISSUES MAY CHANGE, BUT THE CENTRAL PROBLEM IS STILL BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS. TODAY WE HAVE TO BE CONCERNED NOT JUST WITH WORKING CONDITIONS INSIDE FACTORIES, BUT WITH CONDITIONS OF LIFE IN THE COMMUNITIES OF WHICH THE FACTORIES ARE A PART. THE ILGWU KNOWS THERE IS A DIRECT CONNECTION BETWEEN BROAD QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN AMERICAN SOCIETY AND THE LONG-TERM WELFARE OF AMERICAN LABOR. YOU HAVE LED THE WAY AMONG AMERICAN UNIONS IN THIS RESPECT AND I SALUTE YOU.

LINKED TO THE PROBLEMS OF DETERIORATING CITIES, POLLUTED AIR AND IMPURE WATER, IS ANOTHER PROBLEM OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE TODAY. THIS PROBLEM, TOO, DESERVES OUR IMPATIENCE, OUR ENERGIES AND OUR EFFORTS.

I REFER TO THE PROBLEM OF CORPORATE AND ECONOMIC FAILURE

AS YOU KNOW FROM THE COLD STATISTICS OF HARDSHIP AND DESPAIR, AMERICA IS STILL NOT OUT OF THE ECONOMIC RECESSION. SIX PERCENT OF OUR WORK FORCE IS JOBLESS. MORE THAN FIVE MILLION AMERICANS KNOW FIRST-HAND ABOUT THE RECESSION.

INCLUDED IN THAT NUMBER ARE 300,000 VIETNAM VETERANS FOR WHOM WE HAVE FOUND WORK IN THE JUNGLES OF ASIA, BUT FOR WHOM WORK CANNOT BE FOUND AT HOME.

AMERICAN BUSINESS IS WORKING AT ONLY 72 PERCENT OF ITS CAPACITY. THE ADMINISTRATION'S POLICIES HAVE HAD LITTLE EFFECT ON CURBING SPIRALING INFLATION.

THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION WANTS TO GRANT A \$3 BILLION TAX WRITE-OFF FOR INDUSTRIAL DEPRECIATION THIS YEAR. THAT MONEY MIGHT BE USED IN A PUBLIC SERVICE JOBS PROGRAM WHICH WOULD PUT MEN TO WORK IN EDUCATION, CONSTRUCTION, ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL AND HEALTH. THESE JOBS ARE NEEDED BY OUR SOCIETY. YET THE PRESIDENT VETOED PUBLIC SERVICE JOBS LEGISLATION LAST YEAR AND THREATENS TO DO SO AGAIN THIS YEAR. THERE IS TOO MUCH TO DO IN OUR NATION TO KEEP ABLE-BODIED MEN OUT OF WORK, AND WORKERS ARE POWERLESS TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.

PRESIDENT NIXON'S IDEA OF HELPING UNEMPLOYED WORKERS IS TO GIVE A NEW TAX BREAK TO BUSINESS. WHAT KIND OF REVENUE SHARING IS THAT?

THAT'S THE 'OLD "TRICKLE-DOWN THEORY" OF MONEY: IF ENOUGH WEALTHY PEOPLE BUY LIMOUSINES, THERE WILL BE MORE JOBS FOR CHAUFFEURS.

PRESIDENT NIXON SAYS THAT ONE WAY TO CUT WELFARE COSTS IS TO PUT ABLE-BODIED MEN TO WORK. I'LL SAY ONE THING FOR HIM. HIS ADMINISTRATION HAS ALREADY DOUBLED THE NUMBER OF ABLE-BODIED AMERICANS LOOKING FOR WORK.

IN THE FIFTIES WE LEARNED THAT THE TRICKLE-DOWN THEORY OF ECONOMIC GROWTH DOESN'T WORK. IN THE EARLY SIXTIES WE LEARNED THAT GIVING THE ECONOMY A BOOST THROUGH A SENSIBLE COMBINATION OF TAX POLICIES AND PUBLIC SPENDING DOES WORK. WE CAN DO THAT AGAIN, IF WE WILL.

BUT EVEN IF WE OVERCOME THE PRESENT RECESSION, OUR ECONOMIC PROBLEMS WON'T BE OVER. EVEN IN THE BEST OF TIMES ECONOMIC TROUBLES AFFECT TOO MANY WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES. OURS IS A RAPIDLY CHANGING ECONOMY; IT IS ALSO AN ECONOMY IN WHICH ECONOMIC CHANGES CANNOT BE ISOLATED.

CONSIDER THE EFFECTS OF THE PENN-CENTRAL RAILROAD BANKRUPTCY. SCORES OF WORKERS HAVE LOST THEIR JOBS. THE WELL-BEING OF MANY OTHER BUSINESSES, AND THE HEALTH OF A SECTOR OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMY HAVE BEEN JEOPARDIZED. THIS KIND OF FAILURE DOESN'T AFFECT STOCKHOLDERS ALONE. ID

IT HURTS SUPPLIERS AND COMMUNITIES. AND THE WORKERS ARE POWERLESS TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.

LOCKHEED AIRCRAFT CORPORATION HAS AGAIN BECOME INVOLVED IN A FINANCIAL FAILURE. THE ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS CROSS INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARIES; COMPANIES HERE AND ABROAD ARE AFFECTED. THE WORKERS LAID OFF ARE POWERLESS TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. AND CONGRESS IS BEING ASKED TO GIVE THE CORPORATION SOLVENCY AGAIN.

THE CONGRESS MADE A DECLARATION OF NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND SOUND FISCAL INVESTMENT BY TERMINATING THE SST PROGRAM. NATIONAL POLICY MADE A SHIFT AND JOBS ARE AT STAKE. WORKERS ARE CAUGHT COMING AND GOING, POWERLESS TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.

THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN PUSHING A TRADE EXPANSION POLICY. THAT POLICY IS DESIGNED TO INCREASE AMERICAN EXPORTS AND TO EXPAND THE AVAILABILITY OF GOODS IN OUR OWN COUNTRY. BUT TRADE EXPANSION ALSO MEANS JOB CONTRACTION IN THOSE INDUSTRIES THAT CAN BE PREYED ON BY SWEAT SHOP OPERATORS. YOU KNOW THE LONG SAD STORY OF UNFAIR WAGE COMPETITION, FIRST AT HOME AND NOW ABROAD. AND THE WORKERS, BY THEMSELVES, ARE POWERLESS TO STOP IT.

THEY NEED HELP; THEIR COMMUNITIES NEED HELP. AND IT ISN'T PROTECTIONISM THAT SAYS THE DRAKES OUGHT TO BE PUT ON RUNAWAY, LOW-WAGE IMPORT COMPETITION, SO THAT AMERICAN WORKERS CAN BE HELPED AND SO THAT WE CAN DEAL WITH ECONOMIC DISLOCATION.

THESE EXAMPLES REPRESENT WASTE. THEY REPRESENT WASTE OF MONEY INVESTED IN COMMUNITIES, IN THEIR FACILITIES, SCHOOLS. THEY REPRESENT TAX REVENUES LOST IN THE UNEMPLOYMENT OF FORMERLY PRODUCTIVE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY. THEY REPRESENT WASTE OF TALENT, SKILL AND PRECIOUS HUMAN SPIRIT.

WHY HAVE WE NOT DEVELOPED WAYS OF ANTICIPATING THESE KINDS OF ECONOMIC CRISES? WHY DOES GOVERNMENT SEEM POWERLESS IN THE FACE OF THE ECONOMY'S MOVEMENTS? WHY HAVE WE NOT DEVELOPED A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO THE CHANGES IN OUR ECONOMIC CONDITION AND MEETING THE NEEDS OF THOSE WHO DO SUFFER WHEN SHIFTS DO OCCUR?

GOVERNMENT ASKS TOO MUCH OF OUR CITIZENS WHEN IT SHIFTS ITS POLICY WITHOUT COMPENSATING THOSE WHO SUFFER INDIVIDUAL INJURY AND LOSS FOR THE GOOD OF ALL.

WE WANT TO DE-ESCALATE THE ARMS RACE, TO STOP SPENDING BILLIONS OF DOLLARS FOR MORE EFFICIENT WAYS TO ANNIHILATE THE HUMAN RACE. WE WANT TO USE THOSE DOLLARS TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS IN OUR SOCIETY WHICH THREATEN OUR INTERNAL SECURITY.

WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO CONSIDER THE MERITS OF DISARMAMENT IN SEEKING THOSE GOALS, NOT THE NUMBER OF JOBS INVOLVED. YET UNTIL THE JOB DISLOCATION PROBLEM IS FACED IT WILL TEND TO ENCOURAGE THE CONTINUATION OF OUR CURRENT EXPENDITURES IN DEFENSE.

LET US TAKE A LOOK AT ECONOMIC REALITIES. OUR NATION'S ECONOMIC STRUCTURE IS NO LONGER A COLLECTION OF DISTINCT PARTS. THERE IS NO LONGER A CLEAR DIVISION BETWEEN THE ROLES OF LABOR AND MANAGEMENT. LABOR CAN NO LONGER BE EXPECTED TO SILENTLY BEAR THE BURDEN OF DECISIONS MADE IN CORPORATE BOARD ROOMS CLOSED TO LABOR REPRESENTATIVES. WE MUST BEGIN TO GIVE LABOR SOME PART IN THE CORPORATE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS. TOO MANY WORKERS ARE CURRENTLY POWERLESS TO SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THEIR FUTURE IN A COUNTRY WHICH PRIDES ITSELF ON SELF-DETERMINATION.

STOP-CAP MEASURES ARE NOT ENOUGH. WE MUST LOOK BEYOND OUR CURRENT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. THERE WILL ALWAYS BE SHIFTS AND FAILURES WHETHER THE ECONOMY IS STRONG OR WEAK. WE MUST PREVENT FUTURE EPIDEMICS OF JOBLESSNESS BROUGHT ON BY SUCH SHIFTS AND CHANGES.

I BELIEVE IT IS TIME TO CONSIDER A WORKERS' BILL OF RIGHTS.

-- THAT BILL OF RIGHTS SHOULD ASSERT THAT GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE EMPLOYERS ALIKE HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE WORKERS THEY DISPLACE.

-- THE WORKERS' BILL OF RIGHTS SHOULD ASSURE EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS OF RETRAINING, MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT AND RELOCATION ASSISTANCE.

-- IT SHOULD ASSURE A LIVABLE INCOME FOR THOSE WHO ARE LOOKING FOR WORK, OR BEING TRAINED FOR NEW JOBS.

-- WE MUST IMPROVE OUR SYSTEM OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE.

-- AND WE MUST INCREASE THE BENEFITS AND THE PERIOD OF TIME IN WHICH THOSE BENEFITS CAN BE RECEIVED.

THE WORKERS' BILL OF RIGHTS SHOULD INSURE THAT MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE LAID OFF BECAUSE OF ECONOMIC DISLOCATION ARE ASSURED THEIR PENSION RIGHTS AND FRINGE BENEFITS AS THEY MOVE TO NEW JOBS. THE WORKERS' BILL OF RIGHTS MUST MAKE OLDER WORKERS ELIGIBLE FOR EARLY RETIREMENT UNDER SOCIAL SECURITY WHEN THEY HAVE BEEN PERMANENTLY DISPLACED AND CAN'T FIND NEW JOBS.

I AM WORKING ON LEGISLATION TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS OF ECONOMIC DISLOCATION.

AFTER THE DEFEAT OF THE SST I INTRODUCED A BILL TO DEVOTE \$100 MILLION TO EMPLOYING AEROSPACE SKILLS IN TRANSPORTATION DEVELOPMENT. THE BILL SET PRIORITIES FOR AIRCRAFT SAFETY SYSTEMS, MASS TRANSIT AND SHORT TAKE-OFF AND LANDING AIRCRAFT. THESE KINDS OF TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ARE NEEDED NOW.

THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON AIR AND WATER POLLUTION WILL HOLD HEARINGS THIS MONTH TO EXPLORE THE JOB DISLOCATION WHICH MAY OCCUR BECAUSE OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT DECISIONS. THESE HEARINGS WILL BE A BEGINNING OF AN EXAMINATION OF THE OVERALL PROBLEMS OF JOB DISLOCATION IN AMERICA.

WHEN WORKING MEN AND WOMEN SUFFER IN AMERICA, THEN ALL AMERICA SUFFERS.

WE CANNOT END POVERTY IN AN ECONOMICALLY UNCERTAIN NATION. WE CANNOT EDUCATE OUR CHILDREN IN THE WAY WE WOULD LIKE, OR CLEAN UP POLLUTION, OR IMPROVE LAW ENFORCEMENT, OR REBUILD CITIES UNLESS THE ECONOMY IS GROWING, STABLE, AND PEOPLE HAVE JOBS. WE NEED GOVERNMENT IN WASHINGTON AND IN STATE HOUSES AND IN MAYORS' OFFICES THROUGHOUT THE NATION WHICH REALLY CARE, NOT ABOUT A SILENT MAJORITY, BUT A WORKING MAJORITY.

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WE MUST STRIVE TO MAKE THE ECONOMY AND THE PROCESSES OF
GOVERNMENT WORK TO SERVE THE PEOPLE OF THIS LAND.