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Press Release - Opening Remarks for Environmental Hearings

Edmund S. Muskie

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FOR RELEASE

Monday a.m.
May 17, 1971

Senator Edmund S. Muskie released today the text of his opening remarks for the Subcommittee on Air and Water Pollution's hearings on economic dislocation resulting from environmental control orders.

Witnesses for the first day of the hearings, Monday, May 17, will be Ralph Nader of the Center for Study of Responsive Law and Karl R. Bendetsen, chairman and chief executive officer of U.S. Plywood-Champion Papers, Inc.

The hearing will begin at 10 a.m. in Room 4200 of the New Senate Office Building.

The Subcommittee opens this morning two days of hearings on economic dislocation, plant shutdowns, and worker layoffs resulting from environmental control orders.

The subject matter itself, I think, is a healthy sign. It is an index of how rapidly and how far this country and its people have moved with their growing concern for the environment since the Subcommittee was established eight years ago.

From an uneasy feeling that our way of living, our way of doing business were damaging the air, water, and land, we have moved from feeble efforts to clean up pollution to firm resolve backed by tough standards and tough enforcement.

Along the way, we have learned that new technologies can give us new products, new ways of producing goods and services, and new environmental problems. Protection of the total environment, protection of the public health and welfare, have become our goals.

It was inevitable, I think, that the specific possibility of economic dislocation, plant shutdowns, and worker layoffs would be brought to the Subcommittee's attention. Our way of living, our way

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of doing business were bound to collide with national policy.

A very broad aspect of that policy faces us now: If people, workers, communities, industrial plants are to be affected because we have resolved to protect the environment, how and by what means shall their interest, their personal health and welfare, also be protected?

The very broad question leads to an entire series of smaller ones. How do we determine, for example, that a worker layoff or plant shutdown does, indeed, result from an environmental control order? What kind of information should a company be required to provide in order to justify a plant shutdown?

The Subcommittee intends this morning to begin the process of obtaining answers to the very broad question and to the smaller ones. It may be that we will need, later in the year, to visit specific plants of specific industries in specific communities.

To help us get started on this project, it is a pleasure for me to welcome this morning the two witnesses for today's hearing: Mr. Ralph Nader of the Center for the Study of Responsive Law and Mr. Karl Bendetsen, chairman and chief executive officer of U.S. Plywood-Champion Papers, Inc.