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Press Release - Muskie Introduces Two Bills on Drug Control

Edmund S. Muskie

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FOR RELEASE

Tuesday AM's
May 25, 1971

MUSKIE INTRODUCES TWO BILLS ON DRUG CONTROL

Senator Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) will introduce two bills today (Tuesday) to deal with the national drug epidemic by coordinating Federal action against drug abuse and establishing programs to aid international control efforts.

One bill would create an office of Drug Abuse Control within the Executive Office of the President.

The other establishes a separate foreign aid program to enable the United States to assume a leadership role in the international effort to control narcotic production.

Senator Muskie said in his introductory statement that "present Federal efforts to control drugs are fragmented, underfunded and too frequently poorly led. This is not the failure of any one Administration but a national failure."

Under the Senator's first bill, the director of this new Office of Drug Abuse Control would have the authority to coordinate the entire Federal effort to end drug abuse. One of the legislation's most important features empowers the director to make recommendations to the President concerning expenditure of funds for programs relating to drug abuse control located in such Federal Departments as Justice, Treasury, Health, Education and Welfare, State Agriculture, Labor and Defense.

"At present," Senator Muskie said, "no one is in charge of designing a comprehensive, integrated program for dealing with drug abuse. Some agencies are engaged in activities which logically fall within the competence of other parts of the federal government. Other agencies possess the expertise and authority to do more than they are now doing. Still others are not involved in combatting drug abuse, despite their obvious ability to do so.

"Some form of comprehensive planning is required to rectify this situation."

He added that leadership is necessary to convert "the public anger, fear, anxiety and passion which surround this issue into a sense of urgency in the

government bureaucracy. We need someone to assume responsibility and 'take charge.'"

Senator Muskie's second bill would enable the United States to undertake bilateral assistance programs and make contributions to international organizations. The aid would be used for law enforcement assistance, research programs, treatment and rehabilitation centers and crop substitution -- economic development programs which will be required to bring illicit opium production under control.

Senator Muskie said crop substitution may offer the best long-term answer to the international drug problem. Because of the unanswered questions about such a program, the Senator expressed the hope that Congress will be able to consider in a series of hearings not only crop substitution programs but all of the United States' present and possible future international efforts in controlling drugs.

"Narcotics addiction is not solely an American problem," Senator Muskie added. "Opium and its derivatives are used by addicts all over the world, and in some areas even more extensively per capita than in the United States. Opium and its derivatives are smoked, eaten, sniffed, or injected in Iran, Hong Kong, India, Burma, Laos, Thailand, West Germany, Singapore and virtually every other country in the world.

"As long as poppy is grown to supply addicts and users in these countries, some opium will be available and will be utilized to supply the demand for opiates in this country. Thus, if the United States is to control, if not eliminate narcotics addiction in this country, we must be prepared to participate, in a meaningful way, in an international effort to control opium production."

Senator Muskie said he looked forward to working closely with Congressman James A. Scheuer (D-New York), who has introduced similar legislation in the House.