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Floor Statement on Senator Edmund S. Muskie's Approach to the Drug Problem

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American Federation of State, County
& Municipal Employees
D.C.
6/7/71 "The City Killer"

Senate

THURSDAY, JUNE 10, 1971

SENATOR MUSKIE'S APPROACH TO THE DRUG PROBLEM

THE CITY KILLER

We meet today as partners in the enterprise of American government.

From city hall and the county building to the state house and the Capitol, each of us and all of us face a common challenge—to make our society work for people.

That is our business—and it is also the business of America. It is our biggest business and our most essential one.

But in 1971, the business of government is in trouble—and so are the customers we call citizens.

After two and a half years of Federal economic failure, millions of workers are without work and prices are climbing out of sight. You can see the signs of economic decline everywhere in America—in the price of beef at the corner grocery store, in a nine-year high unemployment rate of over 6% for the Nation and 40% for young blacks, in the men and women looking for jobs that are not there on the main streets of your town and mine. Each month, we hear confident predictions which contradict the cold statistics. But the people behind the statistics cannot feed their families with predictions.

And predictions cannot ease the crisis in our cities, our suburbs, and our States. You are living with the crisis everyday. Everyday, you are trying to squeeze resources and services out of an archaic tax structure and an ailing economy. But there is almost nothing left to squeeze. In New York City and New York State, in Detroit and Philadelphia, officials are talking or making mass layoffs of public employees. People are being told to pay more and settle for less. At the same time, the country continues to pour its sons and its treasure into a war no general can win and no reason can make right. Our leaders have not still accepted a simple, vital truth: saving cities in America is more important than destroying villages in Vietnam.

No wonder the discontent of the young and the disadvantaged in the '60s has become the doubt of the vast majority in the '70s.

No wonder so many now believe so little in the integrity, the sense, and the capacity of government in America.

The loss of faith was first felt at the Federal level. But in recent years, the credibility gap has swallowed up our States, our localities, and even our private institutions. Over a year ago, a national magazine summed it up in the despairing question: "Why doesn't anything work anymore?"

No one who wants to serve the public in fact as well as in name can permit that question to remain unanswered. There is no purpose to power in a free society except to respond to the wishes and grievances of people. That is now and it always has been our first duty as partners in government.

And the American Federation of state, county, and municipal employees has led the way. Across the whole spectrum of critical issues, your voice has been heard and your views have been heeded. And in 1971, you are again in the frontlines of the fight for progress.

You have spoken up for peace—for the diversion of our resources from the tasks of death abroad to the tasks of life at home.

You have stood against regressive local tax structures and for tax reform at every level of government.

You have demanded a massive program of public service jobs and the release of the domestic funds now impounded by the Nixon administration.

Your union and your leadership have lived up to Adlai Stevenson's 1952 advice: You have talked sense to the American people—about the desperate need for more state and local revenues, about the urgent need for welfare reform, about the official inaction and insensitivity your President has called "madness." You have talked about all that—and you have also done something about it. You have formed a coalition of public employee organizations to push and prod government in a new direction. And you are working for a labor relations act which will protect your right to bargain for the right policies for our cities and our states.

I agree with you that there is much to do.

I agree with Jerry Wurf that "... the life of some cities and our Federal system is at stake."

But I did not come here today simply to agree. Instead, I want to ask you to focus your attention on another critical urban problem. I want to ask you and your union to add another priority to your agenda. I want to ask you to contribute your power and your influence to the struggle against our deadliest urban danger.

I am talking about the evil white powder Stewart Alsop calls the "City Killer"—the power that produces half of our urban crime and most of the fear which stalks our city streets.

I am talking about the epidemic of heroin—the sickness of an addiction which has already infected almost a quarter of a million people in every part of our land.

I am talking about \$500 million worth of private property stolen each year in Washington, D.C. alone— thefts whose only purpose is to feed an expensive, murderous, implacable habit.

I am talking about more billions stolen in our other major cities to pay for the dreams and the death in a hypodermic needle.

I am talking about the corrosion of public institutions as well as private lives—about the recent discovery by members of your union that the drug traffic was flourishing in a Maryland State hospital.

And I am talking about countless condemned Americans:

About 1,000 babies born each year in New York City as addicts, helpless heirs to the terrible pain of their mother's habit.

About the thousands of veterans exposed to heroin in Vietnam who are now carrying a horrible curse home to their families and our cities.

About the other despondent and disillusioned people whose health and will and hope have been shattered almost beyond repair.

And their disease could shatter our cities. What good will more resources do for our States and our localities—if they are consumed by the cost of police and courts to combat spreading addiction and spreading crime? And what will we gain from clean streets or rehabilitated housing or better schools—if people are still afraid to live in cities? All the urban tax reform your union can generate would mean nothing if the threat of drugs drives more and more of the middle class to the suburbs.

So any strategy to save our cities must provide an all out attack on the city killer of heroin. The attack will require a complete commitment of Federal funds and Federal power.

But the plain truth is that the heroin epidemic has been treated like most of the urban crisis. It has been noticed and studied and even denounced. But Washington still refuses to put its priorities where its rhetoric is. Washington talks a good game but everywhere the cities are losing.

You can see why in the sad statistics of the current, half-hearted Federal effort.

In 1971, the Federal Government will spend only \$63 million enforcing our drug laws. That's less than the price of shutting down the SST.

In 1971, the Federal Government will spend only \$7 million on drug education, \$30 million on drug research, and \$45 million on treatment and rehabilitation. That equals the cost of the Vietnam war for one day in 1968.

Last year, the National Institute of Mental Health treated only 1,177 patients—at the incredible cost of \$10,000 each.

Last year, the Community Health Centers Act reached just a few more than 3,000 addicts.

And, while 25% of all addicts are veterans, the Veterans' Administration maintains exactly five drug treatment units with an average of fifteen beds each.

In short, the Federal Government is helping just 2% of the addicts in America. Any system with a record like that is nothing

less than an absolute and total failure.

Obviously, we can and must do more by spending more on law enforcement, research, and treatment. But that is not the whole answer or even most of the answer. As long as drugs flow freely into our country—as long as narcotics is a third or fourth priority, heroin will hook people faster than we can educate them, faster than we can catch them, and faster than we can cure them. We will not even begin to defeat addiction until we care as much about his fix as the junkie does.

We must care at home and abroad. We must care in our cities and in the United Nations. The Federal Government must launch a war on heroin as broad as the world that produces it and as defined as the addict who craves it.

That is why I am sponsoring new narcotics legislation in this session of the Senate. The legislation calls for two major reforms. I believe both of them are essential.

We must set up a central Federal agency with overall responsibility for fighting drug abuse.

This agency must have as much money as it needs. It must be directly responsible to the President. And it must devise and implement a coherent national effort to pull all our present programs together and push them to their maximum limits. A single office of drug abuse offers far more hope than a half-hearted Federal effort, fragmented among six cabinet agencies—each of them hobbled by inadequate power and insufficient skills—all of them partly responsible for a problem none of them can resolve.

But domestic control alone will never be enough. We must go beyond the cities where the epidemic strikes to the foreign roots of the crisis—the opium poppy from which heroin is made.

And that is the second imperative. Through our economic aid program, we must work with every nation in the world to control opium production everywhere in the world. The poppy is the only flower that kills—and our aid must be to kill it off.

Together with the Government of Turkey, we are operating a small program to cut the number of Turkish provinces growing opium from twenty-one in 1967 to four by the end of 1971. This administration has done that much—and I am pleased that it has. But it is far from even a half-way measure. Our five million dollars in compensation for Turkish farmers will barely dent the world-wide heroin harvest.

Already, those who profit from the slavery of addiction are moving east from Turkey, once the source of almost 80% of America's heroin. It is no consolation that the heroin which hooks a child in Boston now comes from a different country. We have seen all this before. And we will see it again—as long as our foreign anti-opium programs merely chase the poppy across the globe.

In 1955, the abolition of opium production in Iran simply shifted opium plantations to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Indochina. Burma alone now grows over 30% of the world's supply. And our allies Thailand and Laos account for another 30% of the drug that is among our worst enemies.

We must use our foreign aid and our foreign influence to stop this incredible traffic in human torment. We must found and finance an international program of agricultural education, rural development, and crop substitution. We must make it profitable not to grow the poppies which are used to make illegal heroin.

Destroying heroin at its source will be difficult. It will take a long time and it will cost money. But this country spends \$75 billion on defense and war. Surely, we can afford a fraction as much to protect our children, our cities, and our safety.

There are no easy answers to heroin—and there is no single answer. Methadone maintenance, ambulatory treatment, and antagonist drugs hold out both promise and problems. But of this I am certain—we must try as much as we can and spend as much as we can afford. And we must look beyond conventional solutions.

Ultimately, our only real chance for a stronger attack on heroin is probably a stronger United Nations. Poppy producing countries could more readily enter a U.N. heroin agreement than yield to the pressure of the United States. And the United Nations could condition continued membership on the willingness to accept regular international monitoring of poppy production. India is one of the world's largest producers—but its control system has reduced the illegal output of heroin to virtually nothing. A United Nations narcotics force with real power could do as much in every part of the globe—and that would make a real difference in every American city.

The poppy fields of Asia seem very far away. But they are as near as the pusher in downtown Washington or the next robbery in Arlington. Their impact on the future and the fate of our cities is equalled only by the impact of the present fiscal crisis. And the battle against heroin is as crucial as the battle for local financial survival.

No one has a greater stake in the outcome than this union.

You are fighting to keep our cities alive—and their life may quite literally depend on whether we can control the drug that has been labelled the city killer.

In the days and months ahead, you will be waging some vital campaigns for urban survival. And I have enlisted for the duration.

I think we will prevail.

I think we will make government in America once again work for people.

And our success will be due in large measure to your union.

I am proud to talk with you and proud to stand with you. And I will always be proud to call myself your partner in the enterprise of government.
