

Bates College

SCARAB

Speeches

Edmund S. Muskie Papers

6-25-1971

Senator Edmund S. Muskie Remarks on Israel at Marvin Davis Dinner Party

Edmund S. Muskie

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scarab.bates.edu/msp>

Recommended Citation

Muskie, Edmund S., "Senator Edmund S. Muskie Remarks on Israel at Marvin Davis Dinner Party" (1971). *Speeches*. 102.

<https://scarab.bates.edu/msp/102>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Edmund S. Muskie Papers at SCARAB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Speeches by an authorized administrator of SCARAB. For more information, please contact batesscarab@bates.edu.

JUNE 25, 1971

SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE

REMARKS ON ISRAEL

DENVER, COLORADO

WELL, MARVIN DAVIS HAS CERTAINLY THROWN QUITE
A DINNER PARTY IN QUITE A HOUSE. THIS AFTERNOON, I DISCOVERED
THAT I NEEDED A MAP TO GET FROM MY BEDROOM TO THE LIVING
ROOM . . . THE WALK REMINDED ME OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S
WORDS ABOUT A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES.

ON THE WAY IN TO DENVER LAST NIGHT SOMEONE ASKED
ME IF MY ORGANIZATION WAS REALLY HAVING FINANCIAL PROBLEMS.
I ASSURED THEM THAT THERE WAS NO TRUTH TO THAT AT ALL . . .

^{WE}
JUST AS WERE LANDING IN MY CHARTERED GLIDER.

SOMETIMES, I GET THE FEELING THAT FINANCING EVEN
AN EXPLORATORY PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN IS A LOT LIKE A RESOLUTION
AT A MAINE TOWN MEETING A FEW YEARS AGO.

THE RESOLUTION READ: "RESOLVED: NUMBER ONE, THAT THE TOWN SHOULD BUILD A NEW JAIL; NUMBER TWO, THAT THE NEW JAIL SHOULD BE BUILT FROM THE MATERIALS OF THE OLD JAIL; AND NUMBER THREE, THAT THE OLD JAIL SHOULD BE USED UNTIL THE NEW JAIL IS FINISHED."

IT HAS BEEN SOME TIME SINCE I WAS ON THE RECEIVING CAMPAIGN. END OF A NATIONAL ~~CAMPAIGN~~. AND IN THE LAST TWO OR THREE

YEARS, I HAVE OFTEN WONDERED WHAT IT'S LIKE TO WATCH THE CANDIDATES FROM A DISTANCE. CAN MOST VOTERS SEE BEYOND THE PRESS RELEASES AND THE JOKES, THE PROPOSALS AND THE TELEVISION COMMERCIALS, TO THE UNIQUE, INDIVIDUAL FLESH AND BLOOD HUMAN BEINGS? WHERE DOES THE PLASTIC OF IMAGE-MAKING STOP -- AND WHERE DOES THE HARD-ROCK OF CHARACTER BEGIN?

THERE ARE NO EASY ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS LIKE THAT.

TECHNOLOGY AND HISTORY HAVE SENTENCED CANDIDATES AND CITIZENS

ALIKE TO A LONG AND EXPENSIVE ORDEAL, WHERE PEOPLE CAN OFTEN

REACH A POLITICIAN'S HAND, BUT CAN SELDOM TOUCH HIS SOUL.

IT'S A FRUSTRATING PROCESS -- THIS BUSINESS OF LISTENING

THROUGH THE NOISE AND LISTENING FOR THE MAN SOMEWHERE IN

THE MIDST OF THE CAMPAIGN, IT'S LIKE BUYING A BRIGHTLY

COLORED GRAB BAG -- YOU CAN NEVER BE COMPLETELY SURE WHAT'S

INSIDE.

AND THE PROCESS IS ALMOST AS FRUSTRATING FROM MY

END. THERE, THE TASK IS TO MAKE PEOPLE UNDERSTAND, TO MOVE

THEM, TO DISCOVER WITH THEM A NEW WAY TO A BETTER COUNTRY.

FROM AIRPLANE TO AIRPLANE, FROM MEETING TO MEETING, FROM

SPEECH TO SPEECH, THE POTENTIAL CANDIDATE KEEPS FOLLOWING

THE LITURGY OF POLITICS AND KEEPS REPEATING HIS LITANY OF

PROMISES.

I DON'T KNOW HOW THE PUBLIC ENDURES IT FOR SO LONG.

BUT I CAN EXPLAIN HOW JUST ONE POLITICIAN DOES BECAUSE I
HAVE ASKED MYSELF "WHY" AGAIN AND AGAIN.

PART OF THE ANSWER IS THE CHALLENGE -- THE CHANCE
TO SHAPE EVENTS AND CHANGE THE LIFE OF THE NATION. THE OTHER
PART IS CONCERN -- THE SIMPLE DECENCY OF CARING WHAT HAPPENS
TO REAL PEOPLE AND VITAL PRINCIPLES. EVERY AMERICAN HAS
A VISION FOR AMERICA. THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE THAT VISION
A REALITY COMES TO FEW MEN. AND BECAUSE IT MAY COME TO ME --
BECAUSE SOME OF YOU MAY HELP IT COME TO ME -- I WANT TO TALK
WITH YOU TONIGHT ABOUT MY OWN HOPES AND BELIEFS.

THE CONVENTIONAL WAY TO SPEAK WITH YOU WOULD BE
A LAUNDRY LIST OF PROBLEMS AND PLANS. BUT THAT REALLY SAYS
SO LITTLE AND REVEALS EVEN LESS. IN 1968, RICHARD NIXON
PUT OUT A BOOK PROVING THAT HE HAD TAKEN OVER A HUNDRED
SPECIFIC POSITIONS ON THE ISSUES.

I WAS NO MORE COMFORTABLE WITH HIM AFTER PUBLICATION THAN BEFORE.

INSTEAD OF PULLING SOMETHING LIKE THAT NOW, I WOULD LIKE TO TELL YOU WHAT I THINK ABOUT A SINGLE ISSUE -- AN ISSUE WHICH I KNOW IS CLOSE TO EVERYONE HERE -- THE ISSUE OF ISRAEL'S SURVIVAL AND SECURITY. I HAVE SPOKEN ABOUT THAT ISSUE TIME AND AGAIN -- AND I HAVE BEEN DISAPPOINTED BY THE OCCASIONAL DOUBTS ABOUT WHERE I STAND. I HOPE THERE WILL BE NO DOUBTS LEFT AFTER TONIGHT. THAT'S WHY I WANT TO TELL YOU NOT ONLY WHAT I THINK, BUT WHAT I FEEL.

I AM TALKING ABOUT THE FEELING I HAD LAST JANUARY, WHEN I VISITED A YOUNG COUNTRY BUILT AND SUSTAINED BY AN ABIDING FAITH IN HUMANITY'S OLDEST HERITAGE.

I AM TALKING ABOUT MY FEELING WHEN I STOOD IN YAD VESHEM, THE MEMORIAL TO SIX MILLION DEAD JEWS WHO WILL ALWAYS LIVE IN THE MEMORY OF THEIR MARTYRDOM.

I AM TALKING ABOUT MY FEELING IN THE BOMB SHELTER
OF KIBBUTZ GESHER, WHERE THE CHILDREN HAD PAINTED WALL
PICTURES ABOUT THE PEACE THAT IS THEIR DREAM INSTEAD OF THE
WAR THAT HAS BEEN THEIR FATE.

AND I AM TALKING ABOUT MY FEELING IN KIBBUTZ
S'DE BOKER DURING MY TALK WITH DAVID BEN GURION -- A FEELING
EQUALLED ONLY BY MY REACTION TO THE BRAVERY OF GOLDA MEIR,
WHOSE SPIRIT IS AS YOUNG AS THE COUNTRY SHE LEADS.

SO WHEN I LEFT ISRAEL ONLY A FEW MONTHS AGO, I
FELT SOMETHING IN MY HEART THAT I HAD KNOWN IN MY HEAD FOR
A LONG TIME. I FELT ISRAEL'S URGENT, MORAL CLAIM ON OUR
SUPPORT -- NOT MERELY THE SUPPORT OF OUR WORDS, BUT THE
SUPPORT OF OUR DEEDS. AND IN THE MIDDLE EAST I ALSO LEARNED
AGAIN A STARK AND SIMPLE TRUTH -- THAT THE SECURITY OF
ISRAEL IS CLOSELY RELATED TO THE SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES.

IN 1971, THIS TRUTH MUST BE THE
FOUNDATION FOR AMERICAN POLICY. IT IS NO LONGER ENOUGH --
AND IT NEVER WAS ENOUGH -- TO RELY ON THE DIPLOMACY OF
MERE REACTION TO RUSSIAN POWER POLITICS IN THE MIDDLE EAST.
WHAT MAY SEEM DETAILS OF DIPLOMACY TO US MAY BE MATTERS OF
SURVIVAL FOR ISRAEL. BOTH OUR POLICY AND OUR STRENGTH MUST
REMAIN CONSTANT -- SO ISRAEL CAN BECOME AS CERTAIN OF OUR
SUPPORT AS SHE IS OF HER OWN RESOLUTION.

WE MUST BACK ISRAEL'S DEMAND FOR DEFENSIBLE
BORDERS. FROM THE BEGINNING UNTIL 1967, THE WEAKNESS OF
ISRAEL'S FRONTIER WAS AN ENEMY'S BEST ALLY. THE WAY TO
PREVENT A NEW AND SIMILAR ALLIANCE NOW IS AN INTERNATIONALLY
RECOGNIZED BORDER ADJUSTMENT. THAT WOULD NOT BE UNUSUAL
AND IT WOULD NOT BE UNFAIR. AS I POINTED OUT TO PREMIER
KOSYGIN IN MOSCOW, ISRAEL NEEDS THE KIND OF BORDER SECURITY
RUSSIA CLAIMED TO NEED AFTER THE FINNISH WAR AND WORLD WAR II --

THE SECURITY OF FRONTIERS THAT ARE A SHIELD AGAINST ATTACK
INSTEAD OF AN INVITATION TO AGGRESSION.

AND ISRAEL DESERVES MORE THAN THAT. SHE DESERVES
THE RIGHT TO DETERMINE HER OWN FATE -- AND EVERY OTHER
COUNTRY IN THE MIDDLE EAST HAS A SIMILAR RIGHT. THE GREAT
POWERS SHOULD HELP -- BUT THEY CANNOT DECIDE. A LASTING
PLACE WILL RESULT ONLY FROM NEGOTIATIONS BY THE PARTIES
DIRECTLY INVOLVED. AND THE UNITED STATES MUST DO NOTHING
TO UNDERMINE ISRAEL'S BARGAINING POSITION.

BUT THERE IS SOMETHING OUR COUNTRY CAN AND MUST
DO. THOUGH WE HOPE AS MUCH AS ISRAEL FOR A PERMANENT PEACE,
WE MUST ALSO ASSURE ISRAEL OF ENOUGH POWER TO DETER RENEWED
WAR. THE RIGHT AIM IS TO STOP THE ARMS RACE IN THE MIDDLE
EAST. BUT ARMS CONTROL ON ONE SIDE AND AN ARMS INCREASE ON
THE OTHER WILL ONLY TIGHTEN THE TENSIONS AND ENCOURAGE MORE
BLOODSHED AND VIOLENCE.

THAT WOULD THREATEN OUR OWN SECURITY -- AND THAT
IS ANOTHER REASON WHY WE MUST SECURE THE STRENGTH OF ISRAEL.

I HAVE BELIEVED THAT FROM THE BEGINNING. I BELIEVED
IT IN 1967 WHEN I CO-SPONSORED THE SYMINGTON-JAVITS RESOLUTION
FOR A JUST SETTLEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST. I BELIEVED IT
IN 1970 WHEN I SUPPORTED MORE PLANES FOR ISRAEL. AND I
BELIEVED IT WHEN I WENT TO ISRAEL LAST JANUARY AND A WEEK
LATER WHEN I TOLD IT TO PREMIER KOSYGIN IN MOSCOW.

IN MY SHORT TIME IN THE MIDDLE EAST, I FOUND A
NEW SENSE OF UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THAT BELIEF. I SAW BETTER
THAN I EVER COULD ON PAPER OR IN STATE DEPARTMENT REPORTS
WHAT ISRAEL IS REALLY ALL ABOUT. AND I REMEMBERED MY
FATHER'S EXPLANATION OF AMERICA'S MEANING TO HIM -- TO
A MAN WHO FINALLY FOUND IN RUMFORD, MAINE, A DECENT REFUGE
FROM THE OPPRESSION OF EASTERN EUROPE.

THE KIND OF LIFE HE BUILT HERE AND THE KIND OF
LIFE JEWS HAVE BUILT IN ISRAEL ARE THINGS TOO PRECIOUS TO
LOSE. THEY MUST COMMAND OUR ENERGY AND OUR ATTENTION NOW
AND IN THE YEARS TO COME. WE MUST WAGE THE STRUGGLE TOGETHER --
IN POLITICS, IN GOVERNMENT, AND IN PRIVATE LIFE. AND NO
MATTER WHERE EVENTS AND FORTUNE TAKE ME IN THE NEXT FEW
MONTHS, I INTEND TO REMAIN PART OF THAT EFFORT.

THANK YOU FOR LETTING ME CONVERSE WITH YOU TONIGHT.
IT HAS BEEN A RARE TREAT TO EAT EXCELLENT FOOD AT A POLITICAL
DINNER. AND IT WILL BE A PLEASURE TO JUST STAND HERE AND
EXCHANGE SOME THOUGHTS WITH YOU. OF COURSE, I HAVE A LONG
WAY TO GO BETWEEN NOW AND THE END OF THE CURRENT POLITICAL
SEASON. IF ANY OF YOU WOULD LIKE TO COME WITH ME, I AM
SURE THAT TOGETHER WE CAN DO SOMETHING IMPORTANT FOR AMERICA.

#