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Edmund S. Muskie Papers

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Remarks of Senator Edmund S. Muskie at Meeting With Low-Income Families

Edmund S. Muskie

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Bangor, Maine Inner City Ministry
7/20/71

I appreciate your kind invitation to be here this evening, Reverend Willis.

I must say, however, that I feel a little like the father who thought it was time to tell his son something about the facts of life.

It took considerable courage, but finally one evening, after dinner, the father invited the boy into the living room. Not quite sure about how to approach the subject, the father hemmed and hawed a bit. But finally he said, "Son I should like to discuss with you some of the facts of life." To which the son replied: "Father, that is fine with me. What would you like to know?"

Well, I think all of us in this room know what some of the facts of life are today

The facts of life about our economy...about our ^{cost} ~~standard~~ of ~~the~~ living...are not only true of the big cities that most people seem to write about...like New York and Los Angeles and Chicago and Philadelphia.

The hard ~~economic~~ facts of ^{are also} ~~the~~ economic life ~~can also be~~ found very quickly in the ~~xxx~~ small cities and towns and communities of a State like Maine.

Everything that should be going down is going up -- the cost of food...the cost of clothing...the cost of medical care.

And everything that should be going up is going down --
the number of jobs that pay well...the number of decent
places to live in...the number of good schools for our
children.

It is clear that our economy has been ^{headed in} following some
~~the wrong direction~~
~~very wrong directions.~~

And it is also clear to me that it will take strong
leadership by our highest elected officials -- including
the President -- to bring our economy back on the right
track. That is not an easy job...but it is a necessary one.

To me, it means that we ~~simply~~ have to end the war
in Vietnam. That war has been costing us an enormous
amount of money every year. And, of ~~course~~ course, it has
been costing us the lives of some of ~~ys~~ our youngest and
finest men.

That is why I have proposed in the Senate, what I

My proposal is very simple.
call a Declaration of Peace. /~~Understandably, properly~~

We should develop a timetable for bringing all our troops home within no more than 18 months. I think if we show a real willingness to ~~leave Vietnam~~ ^{leave Vietnam}, then the people in Vietnam will be more likely to settle their differences among themselves.

Making our economy healthy again also means that we simply have to start telling business and labor, in very clear language, to stop trying to ~~run~~ ^{outdo} each other for the ~~biggest~~ ^{bigger} price and wage increases. It is only when everyone is moving toward ~~prosperity~~ prosperity at the same general rate of speed, that we can realistically move ahead at all.

~~That is why I have supported proposals in the Senate to give the President power to control wages and prices, in areas where they can get out of line and cause us all serious trouble.~~

And we ~~simply~~ have to change our national policy as to what the Government should be spending its money on.

You have probably heard some politicians talk about the need for a "balanced budget". That usually means that you should only spend according to what you are going to earn.

But I think a "balanced budget" means something more.

I think it means that we should balance what is important to buy first...against what is not so important to buy at all.

For example, I think that providing decent health care to all Americans is more important, and deserves much more of the budget, than building an anti-ballistic missile system which many scientists say might not even work.

the Senate in
That is why I voted in/favor of a law to improve hospital facilities, and why I voted against spending money for an anti-ballistic missile system several months ago.

I think that providing adequate housing for all Americans is more important, and deserves much more of the budget, than developing a supersonic plane, which will only make it a little shorter to fly between here and Europe.

That is why I have been working on the Banking and Currency Committee in the Senate to encourage new housing construction, and why I voted against spending money for the supersonic transport.

I think that providing jobs for all Americans who are willing and able to work is more important, and deserves much more of the budget, than trying to land on Mars in the next 10 or 20 years.

That is why I have voted in the Senate in favor of more money for job training programs, and less money for ^{outer} traveling in/space.

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I think that is the true meaning of what a
"balanced budget" should be all about.

But while we try to balance things, we can not
forget the immediate problems which many people are facing...
the problems of having to live at very low standards.

That is why I will be working in the Senate, to help
improve the Federal welfare program...to help people get
the assistance they need to live in dignity...given the
amount of money in the national budget we have to work with.

In the Senate, I am going to try to concentrate
on expanding our programs of work training, so that people
can improve their old skills or acquire new ones, with
which to get jobs paying a living wage.

I think we ~~have~~^{must} to insure that anyone who is out of
work through no fault of his own, receives enough assistance
to be able to continue living in a decent manner.

^{must}
I think we ~~have to~~ provide day care centers, so that mothers who wish to can find jobs, and ~~can~~ also be certain that their children are well looked after. But I also think that no mother should be forced to take an outside job, in order to keep receiving welfare assistance.

^{we must}
I think ~~we have to~~ take steps to have the Federal Government lift the burden of administering welfare programs off the backs of the States.

^{must}
And I think we ~~have to~~ guarantee that no good reason exists for anyone to live in poverty, and that ^{any new} ~~the~~ family assistance ^{plan} ~~program~~ ^{realistically} ~~which has been proposed~~ has enough money to ~~actually~~ assist families.

In the Senate, there are two members from each of the 50 States.
~~As you~~
As you can see, ~~by~~ my being one out of 100 means that the way I vote will not always succeed. But I think it is important to vote for what we think is right, at every ~~change~~ chance we have.

And eventually, we may be able to persuade enough other people to accept our point of view.

We all realize that good words will not accomplish anything by themselves. It is what you do and try to do that is important, and that is why ~~the~~ Reverend Willis and the Inner City Ministry¹⁰⁶ have much to be proud of.

It is important to join together...to organize yourselves...so that more people become aware of your problems...so that more people come to understand your point of view...not only at the local level, here in Bangor... but also at the State level...and at the Federal level in Washington.

And I think letting your ~~representatives~~ representatives speaking with know the way you feel...by ~~talking to~~ speaking with them...by writing to them...and by voting for them...is the best way to help make our common goals become a reality.

Thank you.