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PRESS CONFERENCE -- CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE

SEPT. 20, 1971

MUSKIE: Well, a little hectic. I find it difficult to get used to the humidity of the south. But, no, it's been very good. It's the third state over the weekend travels, and I'm very satisfied.

QUESTION: What do you think of the poll that shows you behind Senator Kennedy?

MUSKIE: Well, you'll have to identify it. I get told about so many polls that I'd have to know which one you're talking about to comment on it.

QUESTION: That was the Gallup Poll yesterday, Senator, where the Democratic voters polled 24% favored Senator Kennedy and 22% favored you.

MUSKIE: Next month they'll be another one.

QUESTION: Senator, what effect will Justice Black's resignation have on the Supreme Court?

MUSKIE: Well, I guess we can't really judge until we know the President's recommendation for a replacement. Justice Black, of course, has been probably a greater influence on the court than almost any other Justice in the history of the Court. He has served with a third of all those who have served as Chief Justice, he has served with probably 25% of all those who have served on the Court at all. And he has served for 34 years. He has been an enormous influence. And to replace him is going to be a challenge for any President. And until the President indicates who his replacement is it's important to evaluate the impact.

QUESTION: Mr. Nixon has said he will try to get southern representation on the Court. Would you try to get Southern representation on the Court?

MUSKIE: I think that representation on the Court, or to appoint Justices on the Court, any President ought to be willing to go to any region of the country. I don't think region has anything to do with it. I think that qualifications and the political or social philosophy that the President thinks relevant to the times ought to enter into any President's choices. But I don't think the choices ought to be limited by region.

QUESTION: Senator, do you think there will be any national impact to the Attica situation that will carry over into the campaign as an issue?

MUSKIE: Well, I think the Attica incident focuses upon two important points. One, the need for prison reform in this country, which has been understood for a long time by those who understand the underlying causes of the instability in our society. The Attica situation focuses the attention of the people as a whole on that, in a dramatic way, on that point. And secondly, I think Attica reveals once again that prisons which are the, which house the failings and mistakes of our society, are a reflection of the shortcomings of that society itself as well. And on both these points I would expect a great deal of dialogue in the campaign. Yes.

QUESTION: What strength do you see for Senator Jackson in the South in opposition to you?

MUSKIE: Well, I think he may be a better judge of that than I.

QUESTION: Do you think bussing is going to be an issue by this time next year in the campaign?

MUSKIE: Well, again that's difficult to say. I would assume that the emotionalism related to this issue would be high at the beginning of the school year, which is right now. If the school children involved adjust -- and I find that school children adjust better than their adults often -- so that if they do adjust to the situation I would think that the heat might cool between now and next year. But the underlying problem still, of adjustment between the races is going to be a continuing one for some time. I think that we're moving in some healthy ways now to close that gap, to make those adjustments, and as time goes on I think the relations between the races will be healthier in all parts of the country.

QUESTION: Our Senator here has expressed surprise at your comment about not being able to win with a Black on the ticket. Would you like to respond?

MUSKIE: Well that isn't a very accurate description of what I say. What I said was that I did not think the country was prepared to support such a ticket at this time. I thought that that was wrong and unfortunate. That we need to create conditions and to accept attitudes which would make it possible for any American otherwise qualified to be on a national ticket. What I had to say was in the nature of an opinion not a decision. I think that is

American people want the truth from political leaders, from political candidates, from governmental institutions. And I think only by speaking the truth as we see it can we come to grips with the real problems, deal with them effectively, and move in the direction of that whole society that I think all Americans of whatever description really want. I happen to be a Catholic. And so much of my life I was told that a Catholic couldn't be elected to national office. And we faced that fact and we faced that truth in this country. And finally changed it in 1960. We can do the same thing with respect to any other minority which may feel it is excluded from political opportunity in this country. And that must be our objective. Now that's what I had to say. And I think that's a far cry from the capsule description you gave of your Senator's description.

QUESTION: Senator, is the country prepared to accept a white Southerner on the Democratic ticket next year?

MUSKIE: I think that depends upon who he is, and what he represents, what he believes. And I think increasingly Americans are going to judge people on their merits. There will be opposition from many quarters to a southerner, as there may be to people of different minorities that are unrelated to geography, but those are the things we have to break down. In my political career since I was first elected governor of my state I've seen breakthroughs. I was the first Catholic ever elected governor of my state. I was the first Democrat elected in 20 years. I've been the first

Democrat ever popularly elected in the Senate from my state. I'm the first son of an immigrant elected Governor or Senator from my state. I'm the first Polish-American elected Governor of any state, or ever elected to the United States Senate. So I've seen these breakthroughs, as minorities of one kind or another have achieved political equality in this country. That's been the thrust of American political history, and I think it will continue, but it will continue only if we recognize and look squarely at the realities and then move to change them where they need to be changed. And that's been the whole thrust of my public life and I intend to continue it.

QUESTION: Senator, you've been outspoken on ecology. How important a role do you plan for this to play in your campaign?

MUSKIE: It may not be as visible an issue, or an issue of the same magnitude as some of the more traditional ones -- like those of war and peace and the economy -- but I think increasingly many, many Americans understand that we have to deal more effectively with the degradation of our environment. And on the basis of my longstanding interest in this I intend to speak out on it in order to take advantage of the higher level of public concern that we now have so that we can write more effective and tougher public policy. But it may not be on the front burner of public concern as some of these other issues are.

QUESTION: There hasn't been a question here this morning about the Vietnam War. Do you think it will be a dead issue by this time next year?

MUSKIE: That depends upon whether we are indeed out of Vietnam. So long as we continue, especially in the light of the present undemocratic nature of the elections in South Vietnam, it has the potential for escalating again into a very visible issue. It's not that visible now, but it can be, because I think that as Americans have looked at the political maneuverings of President Thieu and as they begin to comprehend the undemocratic nature of that election, I think their revulsion against the war and our involvement there is simply intensified. And so it could escalate again. If we're out then it may not be.

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