

Bates College

SCARAB

Speeches

Edmund S. Muskie Papers

7-30-1971

Opening Statement of Senator Edmund S. Muskie at the Drug Abuse Hearings of July 30, 1971

Edmund S. Muskie

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

Recommended Citation

Muskie, Edmund S., "Opening Statement of Senator Edmund S. Muskie at the Drug Abuse Hearings of July 30, 1971" (1971). *Speeches*. 122.

<https://scarab.bates.edu/msp/122>

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.

MUSKIE

Maine

FOR RELEASE

(202) 225-5344

FOR RELEASE:
10 A.M.
July 30, 1971

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE AT THE
DRUG ABUSE HEARINGS OF JULY 30, 1971

This morning the Subcommittees on Intergovernmental Relations and Executive Reorganization and Government Research conclude joint hearings on legislation to direct the Federal Government's efforts against drug abuse.

I think it is appropriate that today, our last day of hearings, our witness will be Doctor Jerome Jaffe, who has been tapped by the President to direct the national drug effort.

Before we hear from Doctor Jaffe, I would like to make a few observations about what we have heard so far.

First, we have seen the scope of the heroin epidemic afflicting our Nation, an epidemic that has ruined the lives of between 250,000 and 300,000 Americans. And we have heard from some of its victims.

Second, these hearings have demonstrated the failure of the Government's responses to the heroin plague.

The fact remains that heroin is still too easily available in too many places.

And the fact remains that Federal, State and local programs together are reaching just a small percentage of America's addicts.

Third, concerning the legislation before us, these hearings have made it clear to me that the drug abuse will not be controlled by the mere creation of a new office, no matter where it is placed. And it would be deceiving the American people, and unfair to Doctor Jaffe, to imply that it would.

We need new ideas and new approaches to combat the drug problem. But most of all, we need the willingness on the part of the Administration and the Congress to devote the resources necessary to deal with the problem.

For my part, I am more and more convinced that the legislation that finally emerges from the Congress should be of the order of the legislation that Senator Hughes and I, with Senators Javits and Williams, introduced last month to reform the entire Federal attack on dangerous drugs. For whatever bill emerges from the Congress must contain, as that bill does, hundreds of millions of new dollars to do the research and develop the programs that are needed to fight the war against narcotics.

Fourth, we can take little solace in the fact that Doctor Jaffe's initial report upon his return from Vietnam indicated that the drug problem among our servicemen in Vietnam may not be as severe as other reports have indicated. Whether among our servicemen in Vietnam or among any other population, an addiction rate of 4 1/2 percent is an astronomically high figure.

If, for example, we had a 4 1/2 percent addiction rate among service-age men in this country, the number of addicts today would be seven or eight times what we now estimate.

Finally, three weeks ago the Attorney General promised that Administration witnesses would testify in Executive Session

concerning the complicity of Vietnamese, Thai and Laotian military and civilian officials in the drug traffic in Southeast Asia. On July 9, Senator Ribicoff and I, acting as Chairmen of these Subcommittees, invited the Attorney General, Secretary of Defense Laird, Secretary of State Rogers, and CIA Director Helms to appear at the earliest possible date to discuss these alarming allegations.

I regret to report this morning that although three weeks have passed, we have not received an affirmative response from the Administration to that request. In fact, the only response we have received at all is a letter from an Assistant to Secretary Laird which said: "This is to advise you that there are no personnel in the Department of Defense qualified to testify in regard to the problem of international drug traffic and we will, therefore, be unable to provide a witness as you have requested."

I am perplexed by that response from the Department of Defense. It is hard to believe that a Department that has sent 2 1/2 million men through Southeast Asia and whose top officials have supplied the U.S. Ambassador in Saigon with a list of high-ranking Vietnamese officials it suspects of involvement in heroin trade, cannot come up with even one official who can discuss the heroin traffic in Southeast Asia before these two Subcommittees.

I do not believe these Subcommittees are asking too much when we ask Administration officials to testify before us about a matter of utmost concern to our constituents. I believe the American people and their elected representatives have a right to know what is behind the nefarious heroin traffic that

is infesting our servicemen in Southeast Asia and destroying our cities and towns at home. I am dismayed at the reluctance of the Administration to tell the American people and the Congress the facts about this matter.

These Subcommittees have moved expeditiously to consider the President's legislation. We have done so in the spirit of complete cooperation. I think it incumbent upon the Administration to display the same kind of cooperation in responding to our request for an Executive Session.