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INTERVIEW WBBM TV
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
September 24, 1971

Q. Senator, can I start by asking you to reflect a little bit on where you stand and what the outlook is, are you pleased with your current situation?

It's a relative question, I suppose. I think we've made important progress in terms of political organization. Even raising money, although that's a constant problem, and solidifying political commitments. So I think that we have made a great deal of progress. There were periods of frustration earlier this year when things seemed much more negative than they are now. I think things are much more positive and we're moving in a better organized, better planned, more deliberate fashion through the next four months than any period since this whole business began. Yes, we have problems. When you are involved in public office at this level there is nothing but problems -- issue problems, organization problems, public relations problems, and so on. But we feel pretty good now we think that we are moving in a more effective way than before.

Q. Do you like being generally considered a front runner?

ESM: Well, since there isn't much I can do about that except just slip out of sight, we'll deal with the problem as we see it.

Q. What do you think of Senator Kennedy's position without openly campaigning or even free campaigning as you apparently are, he seems to stay pretty much up with you in the polls. Does this concern you?

ESM: No. The Kennedy tradition and legend in this country is very strong. There is nothing that any of the rest of us who have talked about it in this connection have to match that. We all understand what that is. Ten years of traumatic involvement with a very attractive, dynamic family of young and effective political leaders. They are bound to have great public support. Probably always will during my lifetime, Maybe not yours--you're a younger man.

Q. Do you think that you will ultimately have to confront and defeat Senator Kennedy in order to win the nomination?

ESM: There is no way of answering a question of that kind. I take Senator Kennedy at his word that he is not a candidate, doesn't want to be a candidate, and I think that means that the very least he will not

he a candidate in congress. So if I'm right in that evaluation in his determination, the question posed is a mute one. If the question should arise in the Convention, it could do so only if the rest of us fall by the wayside. So again there would be no such confrontation that the question suggests. I don't think that Sen. Kennedy intends to be a candidate, maybe doesn't want to be a candidate in '72. But he would not be realistic to close off that option and if there is no one else at that time, I think that the Party has a right to turn and ask him to assume his responsibilities. But that's a year away, and there is a lot that is going to happen before then.

Q. Is political campaigning too long, too costly?

ESM: Yes, I'd say that it is. I don't know whether we can do much about it. Circumstances have propelled the question of next year's election into the public dialogue much earlier than any time that I can remember in my life time. It all has to do, of course, with the trauma of 1968, the ineffectiveness of the President's policies in the period since, and the public desire for strong motivating leadership in our country. That has nothing to do with parties either. This is what the public is hungry for, so the question of national leadership is ever present on the minds of many many people. But in terms of the need to put together the resources, the organization, to meet, to respond to that demand it is very difficult for those of us who are involved.

Q. What does it do to a man? Does it harden you? Does it toughen you? Does it wear you down mostly, or what?

ESM: Well, I hope that it doesn't harden one. I hope it does toughen one. Because it is different. To deal with the problems that this country faces I think is going to require toughness in mind, of character. But it is also going to require compassion and sensitivity. And to combine toughness and sensitivity in leadership is a very neat problem.

Q. Is it possible?

ESM: I think it is. We have examples of national leaders in our past who've been both. I hesitate to use this name, but Illinois is a good place to- Lincoln was a man that combined toughness and sensitivity. And there have been other leaders. Roosevelt combined both... Both Roosevelts did, as a matter of fact. I think Eisenhower combined toughness and sensitivity. He might not have been as activist a President as some might have thought. But he combined both those two characteristics and I think the combination of the two generates the kind of respect and leadership that Americans would like to feel.

Q. One of your campaign comments seems to be following you around the

country now and it's been compared with George Romney's remark about being brainwashed. Do you think the two are analagous?

ESM:

I don't suppose I'm the best judge of that. I must say that the problems that I run into in connection with the question of a black running mate are usually not related to what I said. Not related to what I feel about this problem. There is only one way, only reason, above all, that I am pursuing this road that may take me to a presidential candidacy and that is my deep belief that what we need in this country is leadership which will heal the divisions in our society and motivate Americans once more to begin reaching out to each other, to break down the barriers of prejudice and discrimination. I have no desire to preside over a divided country. It's my deepest dream that if I should aspire to and achieve this office, that I could somehow contribute to the making of an America where anyone who is born in this country can aspire to any office within the power of our people to grant. And I think that to do that requires that we face the realities of where we are. I had to face the realities, political realities, as a Catholic, as a son of an immigrant, as a Democrat in a state which is overwhelmingly Republican. I had to face those realities. By facing them, we have been able to change them. So that the area of political equality and opportunity is expanded to include more. I could wish nothing more strongly than that at this moment in history blacks could aspire to the Presidency, let alone the vice presidency. And I hope to contribute to building a country where that is possible. But now we face this situation. And may I say incidentally, that what I had to say on this subject ----which has been subject to so much controversy--was not a decision, it was an opinion about the present state of public opinion, and I think that blacks and those who are concerned about dealing with black grievances must focus on what it is we try to do first. Is it more important to lose an election next year, or to win one? I don't want to win an election myself personally, if the assumption of that victory is I would promote division in this country. If people, blacks and whites, think that I have no capacity for bringing Americans into a common point of view, into a willingness to share their opportunities as well as their burdens, I don't want the presidency. I wouldn't want to win that kind of an election. I'm interested in an election victory only for the purpose of dealing with the grievances of disadvantaged and deprived Americans, black, white, red, yellow, whoever they are, in any region of this country.

I think the only way I can do that is to be honest about the realities which we face. If I were to have said to that group of black leaders,--and they were a group of black leaders--this wasn't a white audience in the south for example--this was a group of black leaders and we were meeting for the purpose of identifying those areas in which we shared values, shared ideals, and shared objectives. I didn't go there to reject them, I went there to identify our values and what I

understood them to be was the building of a country where blacks as well as whites could have opportunity - political, economical, health, in every other way. And I felt that the only way to begin our dialogue was to be honest with each other. What I said to them was this in my judgment is the present state of public opinion in America. And we have to change because it isn't right. How much can we change about the status of blacks next year? If we were to put a ticket together that loses next year then we would have done nothing effective about all the other grievances blacks face, let alone the black vice-president. What objectives do we seek to serve next year? What I was trying to do is to put into the dialogue, this evaluation. Of course, we take another look at it next year. And it may be that by surfacing this issue now, that we speed the day when political opportunities are available to all Americans, whoever they are.

Q.

I'd like to follow this just one step further, Senator, and inquire about whether the reaction has caused you to in any way change or modify your view of whether it's feasible. The article I mentioned to your staff members yesterday was by a fellow named Andrew Greeley, National Opinion Research Center, here in Chicago. He is a clergyman. He wrote a very thoughtful article in the Chicago Tribune Sunday, saying in effect that maybe this is the time that the deep desire for national reconciliation not only would tolerate but actively support such a thing. He doesn't claim to be a politician or political expert, he was writing from the gut more than anything else, but it was a thoughtful and very constructive article. He didn't try to conclude that it was right, but he said that maybe we should think about it in terms of being a symbol of reconciliation and feeling. I don't know how much thoughtful reaction like that has come back to you, and I don't mean just political jiving for the sake of political advantage, but I would like to ask about other reaction that might have come out of this, and whether it would cause you to revamp or revise your thinking on it. I gather from what you said that you feel strongly that realistically you said the right thing and you believe that it is still right. But I would like to pursue it that much harder if I may. Senator, has reaction to your comment made to the black group in Los Angeles in any way caused you to revise your thinking?

ESM:

Well, in the first place, as I said, it was an opinion of the state of American public opinion at this point. Of course, I could be wrong, but I'm no walking Gallup Poll. But I'm struck by the degree to which black as well as whites totally off the record as well as on the record, said that they appreciated the honesty of that evaluation, and that they agreed with it. Now this doesn't mean that they were satisfied with it, and there is a second wave of reaction that I'm

beginning to see to the effect that well, now let's take a look at it. And taking a look at it, many fair minded decent Americans are saying that this shouldn't be so. They are addressing themselves to the problem of changing it, and it's conceivable that having surfaced the issue that between now and next year there could be a great change in American opinion on this subject. And I would be delighted if there is. I would feel that whatever it cost me politically that it would have been worth the price. We surfaced something that would have the effect of changing the political reality so that next year a black has a greater political opportunity whether it's with respect to the vice-presidency, the governorship of a state, or whatever it may be.

Q. Do you worry that this remark is going to dog you the rest of the way.

ESM No. If I get worried about whether or not honesty will dog me then what other standard do I have to follow? I'm sure that I would be worried about whatever I said because of political expediency and I should be worried about that. But if expressing an honest opinion is reason to be worried about political consequences, then I'm afraid that I will just have to take that.

Q. What would you like to see as Phase II of the economic plan after the 13th of November?

ESM Well, I'd like to see what I proposed for Phase I, before the President made his proposal. There is some indication that that might be what we will get. I've felt for a long time, and said so, that what we need is an independent wage price review board. The decisions that effect prices are not made by the corner grocer when he sets his prices, or by the farmer who plants 10, 20, 50 acres of whatever crop. The decisions, the basic decisions, are made by 75 to 100, maybe 120, major industries in this country. The law of supply and demand in the local market place is what determines prices like automobile prices, steel prices, and so on. This is what determines the wage settlements and the great unions, and the great corporations, so that that is where the inflationary pressures are produced -- the cost plus pressures on inflation. And the best way to deal with those is not an across the board freeze that affects the corner grocer and the school teacher who has just gotten in on a \$100 in pay that she badly needs. Inflationary pressures that we are talking about can be identified in key board rooms, key decision areas of the major elements of our economy. An independent wage price review board can deal with those more flexibly and more effectively and this kind of arbitrary across-the-board wage which imposes so many inequities that in the long run tears itself to pieces. Because any program of this kind

must rest upon public support. Now the President had public support for his proposal because the public has been hungry for this kind of action. When he responded, the public responded favorably without knowing the implications of his policy. But if the policy has the effect of freezing in inequities, the lot of rank and file Americans by the thousands or hundreds of thousands across the country, then he is going to lose that public support. So he needs a more flexible policy which will avoid these small inequities which are large in the lives of individual human beings. A policy that will focus on the major decisions which are really the key to inflation of price stability, employment, or unemployment. I think that the independent wage price review board which I proposed incidentally in Texas the week before the President's economic speech, seems to be what he is headed for now. But I have no pipelines, of course, to this administration's deliberations.

Q. How do you seek convention delegates in Illinois without running a fellow of Mayor Daley's?

EXM: Well, Illinois is one of the more---wholly apart from Mayor Daley---challenging primary problems. We've been analyzing it through our political section, and we don't have a handle on it yet. I don't see it as a confrontation of Mayor Daley. I know that Mayor Daley is a powerful political force in Illinois, and I don't regard that as an obstacle. There are political forces in every state with which one must deal. We expect to be discussing the Illinois political situation with the major and other political leaders in Illinois. In a way that I hope will be constructive and enhance our support here in this state. What the specific problems may be, we face when we get to them.

Q. Are the Muskie delegates running in the city of Chicago as well as elsewhere?

ESM: Well, I haven't yet announced that there will be a Muskie candidacy for delegates to support.

Q. It seems highly unlikely.

Q. (unclear) re new federalism and revenue sharing....

ESM: It has gone through several phases --cooperation federalism, what was Lyndon Johnson's --creative federalism, now the new federalism.

This whole idea that rhetoric can solve our problems has had too much emphasis in recent years. I know that labels are important in public relations in gimmickry and imagery, but it is also the basis for

a lot of cynicism, I think. Yet through all those labels we haven't done anything really very much about strengthening the federal system.

Q. Are you concerned about the revenue sharing thing or is it something that should be postponed in your estimation?

ESM No, I don't think that it should be postponed. I think the president has pulled away a lot of whatever momentum we succeeded in building for it. When he suggested that it should be postponed, whatever he really meant and he has tried to explain it away since, the effect of what he said is just take the heat away. And I think the same thing is true of welfare. It's just too bad. Since all he is talking about is a bookkeeping adjustment that won't really mean postponement. But, my God, when the president of the United States, you know, pulls it out it hurts. And I'm sure it hurt. We might not have got revenue sharing through this congress anyway, though..

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