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Edmund S. Muskie Papers

9-6-1971

Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie at the Alameda County Labor Day Picnic

Edmund S. Muskie

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REMARKS BY SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE AT THE
ALAMEDA COUNTY LABOR DAY PICNIC
PLEASANTON, CALIFORNIA
SEPTEMBER 6, 1971

I AM PROUD TO JOIN YOU ON LABOR DAY. UNLIKE SOME OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON, I DON'T BELIEVE THAT AMERICA'S UNIONS ARE OUT OF STEP WITH AMERICA'S WORKERS.

THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO ARE OUT OF STEP ARE IN THE WHITE HOUSE. THEY THINK THAT THIS COUNTRY IS GOING TO VOTE FOR AN ADMINISTRATION WHICH PLEDGED PROSPERITY... PRODUCED RECESSION... AND NOW PROMISES THE ECONOMIC MIRACLE OF GETTING US BACK WHERE WE WERE WHEN THEY STARTED. IF UNIONS WORKED THAT WAY, YOUR WAGES WOULD BE EXACTLY THE SAME AS IN 1930. BUT OF COURSE THAT WOULD NEVER HAPPEN... LONG BEFORE IT DID, YOU WOULD FIND NEW LEADERSHIP. AND THAT'S WHAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE GOING TO DO IN NOVEMBER OF 1972.

BUT I DON'T WANT TO GIVE YOU THE IMPRESSION THAT I'M A CANDIDATE FOR ANYTHING. ON MY WAY TO THE PLATFORM A WHILE AGO, SOMEONE ASKED ME IF I HAD AN ANNOUNCEMENT TO MAKE... AND ACTUALLY I DO. I WILL NOT RUN IN THE NEXT ELECTION.... FOR GOVERNOR OF THIS STATE. I KNOW I COULD DO A BETTER JOB THAN RONALD REAGAN... ALMOST ANYONE WOULD. BUT I'M NOT ELIGIBLE TO BE GOVERNOR OF CALIFORNIA.... I'M A TAXPAYER.

OF COURSE, VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW HAS A MUCH BIGGER PROBLEM THAN THAT. ON HIS RECENT TRIP AROUND THE WORLD, PROBABLY SOMEWHERE IN AFRICA, HE CAUGHT NIXON FEVER. THAT'S WHEN YOU BEGIN TO WORRY THAT YOU MAY BE THE NEXT PERSON ON YOUR BLOCK TO LOSE YOUR JOB.

BUT THE ADMINISTRATION NOW HAS A POLICY TO CREATE NEW JOBS. IT'S CALLED THE TRICKLE DOWN THEORY. IT'S A PLAN TO GIVE MORE MONEY TO RICH PEOPLE... SO THEY CAN BUY MORE LIMOUSINES AND HIRE MORE CHAUFFEURS. THE REPUBLICANS TRIED THAT ONCE BEFORE... THE RESULT WAS CALLED THE GREAT DEPRESSION.

JUST A YEAR AWAY... ON THE NEXT LABOR DAY... AMERICA WILL BE IN THE MIDST OF ANOTHER ELECTION CAMPAIGN. BUT WE DON'T REALLY NEED DATES TO REMEMBER THAT. MOST OF US CAN TELL THAT A CAMPAIGN IS COMING BY WHAT'S HAPPENING IN WASHINGTON... THE PRESIDENT IS FINALLY DOING SOMETHING ABOUT THE ECONOMY.

WE HAVE APPARENTLY REACHED WHAT ADLAI STEVENSON CALLED "THE REPUBLICANS' LIBERAL HOUR." THAT'S SOMETHING WHICH COMES ONCE EVERY FOUR YEARS, LASTS FOR TWELVE OR FIFTEEN MONTHS, AND MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEARS AFTER EACH ELECTION. THEN THE GRAND OLD PARTY RETURNS TO THE PHILOSOPHY I HEARD OVER TWO DECADES AGO FROM A REPUBLICAN COLLEAGUE IN THE MAINE LEGISLATURE. TOWARD THE END OF MY FIRST SESSION THERE, I ASKED HIM:

"IF YOU'VE BEEN IN THE LEGISLATURE FOR THIRTY YEARS, YOU'VE SEEN A LOT OF CHANGES, HAVEN'T YOU." HE REPLIED: "YUP.... AND I'VE BEEN AGAINST ALL OF THEM."

AND THAT HAS ALSO BEEN THE SAD STORY OF THE NIXON YEARS.

THE PRESIDENT WAS AGAINST FORMER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CLARK CLIFFORD'S TIMETABLE TO END THE WAR IN INDOCHINA. THE PRESIDENT PLEDGED TO BEAT THAT TIMETABLE. IT EXPIRED 700 AMERICAN DEATHS, 3200 AMERICAN CASUALTIES, AND EIGHT LONG MONTHS AGO.

TOO MANY PEOPLE HAVE DIED TO PROP UP A "DEMOCRACY" IN VIETNAM SO UNDEMOCRATIC THAT THE CHOICE IN THE COMING ELECTION HAS BEEN MADE BEFORE THE BALLOTS ARE COUNTED OR EVEN CAST. TO DEFEND THE SAIGON REGIME IS NOT WORTH ONE MORE HUMAN LIFE -- AND IT IS UNWORTHY OF AMERICA'S FREE TRADITION. AND THAT IS WHY SO MANY SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES AND 70% OF OUR PEOPLE ARE FOR SOMETHING THE PRESIDENT IS AGAINST. WE MUST NOW SET A FIXED DATE FOR PROMPT AND TOTAL WITHDRAWAL FROM INDOCHINA.

FOR THE FIRST THIRTY-ONE MONTHS OF HIS ADMINISTRATION, THE PRESIDENT WAS ALSO AGAINST AN EFFECTIVE PROGRAM FOR PROSPERITY. THE ADMINISTRATION PROMISED THAT WE WOULD NOT HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN INFLATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT. THEY HAVE MADE MANY PROMISES, BUT THAT ONE THEY HAVE KEPT.

WE ENDED UP WITH BOTH. THE ADMINISTRATION HAS FAILED TO WIND DOWN THE VIETNAM WAR -- BUT IT HAS SUCCEEDED IN WINDING DOWN THE AMERICAN ECONOMY.

BUT NOW WE ARE TOLD THAT ALL THIS CHANGED ON AUGUST 14. THE ADMINISTRATION SUDDENLY HAS A POLICY -- THEY CALL IT THE BIGGEST ECONOMIC PROGRAM SINCE 1933... NO WONDER.... THAT'S WHAT IT WOULD TAKE TO RESCUE US FROM THE BIGGEST ECONOMIC DISASTER IN FORTY YEARS.

AND EVERY AMERICAN WANTS TO SEE THAT HAPPEN... EVERY REPUBLICAN, EVERY DEMOCRAT, AND EVERY INDEPENDENT. NO POTENTIAL CANDIDATE FOR HIGH OFFICE IN EITHER PARTY HOPES FOR ANY MORE INFLATION. AND NO POTENTIAL CANDIDATE HOPES FOR ANYTHING LESS THAN TOTAL RECOVERY FROM THE RECESSION THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS CREATED.

BUT THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO REPAIR OUR ECONOMY -- BY HELPING THE DESERVING MANY OR BY HELPING THE COMFORTABLE FEW.

WHO DID THE PRESIDENT PICK TO PAY THE PRICE OF STOPPING INFLATION? THE AVERAGE INCOME AMERICAN.

AND WHO DID HE PICK TO REAP MOST OF THE BENEFITS FROM THEIR TAX CUTS? THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY WELL-OFF.

THAT IS NOT RIGHT. IT IS NOT GOOD ECONOMICS. IT IS NOT GOOD SOCIAL POLICY. AND IT IS NOT FAIR.

WE ALL AGREE THAT INFLATION MUST BE STOPPED. THAT'S WHY I HAVE CALLED FOR A WAGE-PRICE REVIEW BOARD OR SOMETHING SIMILAR AGAIN AND AGAIN DURING THE LAST TWO YEARS. NOW THE VITAL QUESTION IS WHAT LIES AHEAD.... WHERE WILL WE TURN AFTER THE CURRENT FREEZE.

I STILL BELIEVE A REVIEW BOARD IS THE BEST ANSWER. AND I ALSO BELIEVE THAT A PRESIDENT WHO IS WILLING TO TRAVEL TO PEKING FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS SHOULD BE WILLING TO TRAVEL DOWN THE STREET FOR AN ECONOMIC CONFERENCE WITH ORGANIZED LABOR. THE UNIONS AND AMERICA'S WORKERS CAN HELP PRESIDENT NIXON FIND WHAT THIS NATION WILL DESPERATELY NEED THIS NOVEMBER -- AN EQUITABLE SYSTEM OF WAGE AND PRICE RESTRAINT.

AFTER THE NINETY-DAY FREEZE....

THERE WILL BE NO EXCUSE FOR LESS RESTRAINT ON CORPORATE PRICES THAN ON WORKERS' WAGES.

THERE WILL BE NO EXCUSE FOR ABROGATING UNION CONTRACTS ALREADY NEGOTIATED IN GOOD FAITH.

THERE WILL BE NO EXCUSE FOR LETTING DIVIDENDS GO SCOT FREE WHILE LABOR'S INCOME IS HELD BACK.

AND THERE WILL BE NO EXCUSE FOR A RISE IN INTEREST RATES BECAUSE THERE IS EVERY REASON FOR INTEREST RATES TO FALL. THE ADMINISTRATION HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO BRING INTEREST RATES DOWN... SO WORKING MEN AND WOMEN CAN BORROW AND BUY ON REASONABLE TERMS.

AND WE ALL HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO BUILD A FAIR POLICY OF ECONOMIC STIMULATION. IT IS NOT FAIR FOR JUST A HANDFUL OF WELL-OFF CITIZENS TO FIND OUT WHAT THEIR COUNTRY CAN DO FOR THEM.

HERE AGAIN, WE ALL AGREE THAT WE MUST PUT MORE MONEY INTO THE ECONOMY. A LOT OF US WERE SAYING THAT WHEN THE ADMINISTRATION WAS STILL ATTEMPTING TO CHEERLEAD THE COUNTRY INTO PROSPERITY. BUT I DID NOT SUPPORT -- AND I WILL NEVER SUPPORT -- A PROGRAM LIKE THE NIXON PLAN.... A PROGRAM WITH APPROXIMATELY \$14 BILLION IN BENEFITS FOR BIG BUSINESS AND ONLY \$5 BILLION FOR AMERICAN WORKERS AND CONSUMERS.... WHICH IS WHAT THE NIXON PROPOSAL WILL DO BY DECEMBER OF 1972.

THE PRESIDENT HAS ASKED FOR THE GREATEST SINGLE BUSINESS TAX CUT IN ANY YEAR IN THE HISTORY OF THIS COUNTRY. AT THE SAME TIME SOCIAL SECURITY TAX INCREASES IN 1972 MAY WIPE OUT EVEN THE VERY MODEST GAINS THE PRESIDENT PROMISES FOR MIDDLE-INCOME AMERICANS.

THE BLUNT TRUTH IS: THE ADMINISTRATION WHICH WAS DOING NOTHING HAS JUST DONE THE WRONG THING. NOW WE MUST WORK TOGETHER FOR ECONOMIC STIMULATION THAT IS FAIR.

INSTEAD OF THE UNNECESSARY \$5 BILLION IN ACCELERATED DEPRECIATION THE ADMINISTRATION PLANS TO GIVE AWAY BY DECEMBER 1972, WE SHOULD DEMAND A THREE-AND-A-HALF BILLION DOLLAR PROGRAM OF EMERGENCY RELIEF TO CITIES, STATES, AND COUNTIES.

A COUNTRY THAT CAN AFFORD FOREIGN AID ABROAD CAN SURELY AFFORD EMERGENCY RELIEF FOR LOCALITIES IN FINANCIAL CRISIS AT HOME. AND I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU WHAT SUCH HELP WOULD MEAN... CALIFORNIANS ALREADY KNOW THAT PROPERTY TAXES ARE FAR TOO HIGH. WE MUST DO SOMETHING TO CONTROL THEM -- AND WE MUST DO IT NOW.

INSTEAD OF THE \$300 MILLION IN INEFFECTIVE SUBSIDIES THE ADMINISTRATION INTENDS TO GIVE AWAY TO LARGE EXPORT INDUSTRIES, WE SHOULD FIGHT FOR A \$250 MILLION PROGRAM OF EXPANDED UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION.

BREADWINNERS CANNOT SUPPORT THEIR FAMILIES WITH THE MERE PROSPECT OF A JOB -- BUT THEY CAN AT LEAST SURVIVE ON UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION THAT COMES TO THEM SOONER AND LASTS LONGER.

INSTEAD OF AN \$8 BILLION INVESTMENT TAX CREDIT FOR CORPORATIONS BY JANUARY 1, 1973, WE SHOULD DEVELOP AND CONSIDER A TEMPORARY AND COMPLETELY NEW \$7 BILLION CONSUMER TAX CREDIT.

EVERY INDIVIDUAL REQUIRED TO FILE A TAX RETURN WOULD RECEIVE UP TO A \$100 CREDIT TOWARD THE PURCHASE OF MAJOR CONSUMER DURABLES EXCEPT AUTOMOBILES... ITEMS RANGING FROM A NEWLY MARRIED COUPLE'S FURNITURE TO A LONG AWAITED T.V. SET FOR A RETIRED STEELWORKER. SUCH A CONSUMER CREDIT WOULD STIMULATE A VITAL ECONOMIC SECTOR. AND -- UNLIKE THE INVESTMENT CREDIT -- IT WOULD ALSO DIRECTLY BENEFIT AMERICANS IN NEED.

FINALLY, BECAUSE MONEY HAS BEEN SAVED BY SUBSTITUTING OTHER, MORE EQUITABLE MEASURES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S PROGRAM, WE SHOULD ALSO WORK FOR PERSONAL TAX CUTS EFFECTIVE SIX MONTHS EARLIER THAN THE ADMINISTRATION HAS ASKED.

THAT WOULD PUT AN ADDITIONAL \$1 BILLION INTO THE WALLET AND POCKETBOOKS OF AMERICA'S TAXPAYERS..... A \$1 BILLION BREAK THAT IS POSSIBLE ONLY IF WE DECIDE TO CUT BACK ON GIVEAWAYS TO BIG BUSINESS.

TODAY, I HAVE TALKED ABOUT THE COMPETING CLAIMS OF DIFFERING ECONOMIC POLICIES -- THE POLICY THE PRESIDENT WANTS.... AND A POLICY TO SERVE ALL OUR PEOPLE. BUT THERE IS ANOTHER ISSUE HERE.... AN ISSUE TOO SELDOM SEEN AND LESS OFTEN SAID AFTER THE SPOTLIGHT SHIFTED TO UNEMPLOYMENT AND INFLATION.

THE WAY ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS HAVE HANDLED -- OR MISHANDLED -- THE ECONOMY IS SADLY TYPICAL OF THEIR RESPONSE TO THE BROADER QUESTION OF ECONOMIC JUSTICE. ALL THE ISSUES WHICH HELD OUR ATTENTION TWO AND THREE YEARS AGO HAVE NOW DISAPPEARED FROM THE CENTER OF OFFICIAL CONCERN. IT IS AS THOUGH THE EARTH HAD OPENED AND SWALLOWED UP EVERY GHETTO WHERE INJUSTICE STILL BREEDS DESPERATION AND DESPAIR... EVERY SICK PATIENT WHO GOES UNTREATED BECAUSE SHE CANNOT AFFORD A DOCTOR... EVERY HOME WHERE MONEY INSTEAD OF TALENT DECIDES WHETHER A SON OR A DAUGHTER WILL HAVE A CHANCE FOR COLLEGE.

IT IS ALMOST PAINFUL TO LOOK BACK TO 1968... IN SO MANY WAYS, A DIFFICULT AND DREADFUL YEAR. YET IN THE END, AT LEAST WE WERE TOLD THAT WE WERE READY TO MOVE TOWARD A MORE DECENT COUNTRY.

BUT DID WE GO THROUGH ALL THAT FOR THIS --

TO WITNESS THE CONTINUED DECLINE OF URBAN AMERICA... NOW EVEN MORE UNSAFE AND EVEN LESS LIVEABLE THAN IT WAS BEFORE?

TO SETTLE FOR A NATION THAT IS FIRST IN WEALTH, BUT FAR BEHIND IN HEALTH... WHERE MALE LIFE EXPECTANCY IS LOWER THAN IN SEVENTEEN OTHER COUNTRIES?

TO WATCH A NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION DO NOTHING AS THE NUMBER OF AMERICANS IN POVERTY INCREASED LAST YEAR... FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A DECADE?

TO TOLERATE A TAX SYSTEM WHERE MILLIONAIRES OFTEN PAY LESS THAN MACHINISTS.... AND SOME OF THEM PAY NOTHING AT ALL?

ONLY A SHORT TIME AGO, WE WERE TALKING ABOUT MOVING THIS COUNTRY FORWARD -- AND WE WERE TRYING TO DECIDE HOW WE COULD DO BETTER. SINCE THEN, WE HAVE DONE SO LITTLE AND LOST SO MUCH.

IT IS TIME FOR ACTIVE, EFFECTIVE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP. IT IS TIME TO TAKE THIS COUNTRY OFF DEAD CENTER, WHERE OUR BEST HOPES ARE ALREADY DYING. IN 1971, THE AGENDA OF ECONOMIC JUSTICE MUST BE RESTATED... DEBATED... AND FULFILLED. WE MUST ASK SOME SIMPLE BUT FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS.

ARE WE READY... AND IS THE PRESIDENT WILLING... TO GUARANTEE A
JOB OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERY WORKER? ... I AM..... ARE YOU?

ARE WE READY... AND IS THE PRESIDENT WILLING... TO GUARANTEE
NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE FOR EVERY AMERICAN?.... I AM... ARE YOU?

ARE WE READY... AND IS THE PRESIDENT WILLING.... TO PUT MORE DOLLARS
AND LESS TOUGH TALK INTO THE WAR AGAINST CRIME? ... I AM... ARE YOU?

I REMEMBER AN OLD UNION ORGANIZING SONG, "WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?".
AND THOUGH I CANNOT PREDICT WHERE I WILL BE ON AMERICA'S NEXT LABOR DAY,
THIS MUCH I DO KNOW... WHEREVER I AM, I WILL BE STANDING ON THE SAME
SIDE YOU ARE.... AGAINST SPECIAL PRIVILEGE AND FOR ECONOMIC FAIRNESS.

AND BY WORKING TOGETHER, I AM CONVINCED THAT WE CAN PUT GOVERNMENT
BACK ON THE RIGHT SIDE -- THE SIDE OF THE PEOPLE.

TOGETHER LET US DO THAT MUCH -- AND THEN WE CAN DO SO MUCH MORE.

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