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Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie at the University of Miami Student Union

Edmund S. Muskie

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REMARKS BY SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI - STUDENT UNION

12:00 NOON, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1971

I suspect most of you are here because you think I may run for President in 1972.

Well, I'm here for the same reason.

But it isn't easy for someone who is so squarely identified with politics and the work of government to speak on a college campus. . . . Politicians are advocates for the political system. We believe in it. I believe in it. And I know that young people sometimes don't -- that students often view the work of government with cynicism and distrust. I also somewhat reluctantly concede that much of what you feel is true.

But too often, I think, young people equate the political system with the wrong that it does instead of the right that it could do. The machinery we call politics can do so very much. It can feed a hungry child in Mississippi. . . it can stop a brutal war half a world away. . . it can clean the poison from our air and waters. . . and it can enhance the standard of life for every citizen in this country. It can also fail to do these things. And its ultimate

success or failure may depend on the decisions which you and your generation make in the months ahead.

The Twenty-sixth Amendment has given you the right to vote. . . the right to be heard and to be heeded. . . the right to cast a ballot for leaders who share your beliefs.

Last week, I was in Boston for a voter registration rally. So was Senator McGovern and Senator Brooke and Congressman McCloskey. There was only one thing missing. . . 90% of the 30,000 young people who were supposed to turn out.

I know that a single rally won't make or break a movement.

I know that other registration rallies in other places have done very well.

But I think there is a danger, that after all the gains and pains of 1968, millions of young Americans will simply give up on politics.

That is why I often choose a question and answer format on college campuses. It gives me a chance to talk with you without hiding behind a prepared speech.

If I am honest, you will know it, and that is good for me.

If I can encourage you to give the system another chance, that is good for the country.

I am convinced that your generation can change America. You will not succeed immediately or completely. But are you ready to try?

That is my question -- And now I would be happy to answer yours.

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