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An American Strategy - Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie at the Blue Key Banquet

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"AN AMERICAN STRATEGY"

REMARKS BY SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE

BLUE KEY BANQUET - UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

5:15 P.M., FRIDAY, OCTOBER 22, 1971

THIS SPEECH IS BILLED AS AN ADDRESS TO A NON-PARTISAN AUDIENCE
BY A SENATOR FROM MAINE.

BUT THOUGH THE BLUE KEY IS NON-PARTISAN AND THOUGH I HAPPEN
TO BE A SENATOR, ALL OF US KNOW THERE IS MORE TO OUR MEETING THAN
THAT.

MANY OF YOU SEE THIS SPEECH AS YOUR CHANCE TO SIZE ME UP. . .
TO MEASURE A MAN WHO MAY BECOME A CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT.

YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT I BELIEVE. . .WHAT I FEEL. . .AND WHAT
I'M LIKE. NO SPEECH CAN CONVEY THAT MUCH. BUT THIS MUCH YOU DO
DESERVE. . .TO HEAR EXACTLY WHAT I THINK. . .ABOUT OUR COUNTRY AND
YOUR STATE. . .AND ABOUT THE SOUTH.

I THINK THE SOUTH MADE A MISTAKE IN 1968.

AND I HAVE CHOSEN THIS TIME AND THIS PLACE TO DISCUSS THAT
MISTAKE--AND THE DECISION THE SOUTH MUST FACE NEXT YEAR.

IN THE LAST NATIONAL CAMPAIGN, MILLIONS OF SOUTHERNERS
SURRENDERED TO THE POLITICS WHICH EXPLOITS PROBLEMS INSTEAD OF SOLVING
THEM. THAT KIND OF POLITICS HAD NO NAME IN 1968. NOW IT IS CALLED
THE SOUTHERN STRATEGY--AND IT IS AN INSULT TO THE SOUTH.

IT ASSUMES THAT APPEALS TO SECTIONALISM OR APPEALS TO FEAR
CAN PERSUADE YOU TO FORGET THREE YEARS OF FAILURE. . .THREE YEARS
OF SPREADING UNEMPLOYMENT AND CRIPPLING INFLATION. . .THREE YEARS
OF BROKEN PROMISES ABOUT CRIME CONTROL AND DRUGS. . .THREE YEARS
WHICH HAVE BROUGHT FLORIDA, THE SOUTH, AND THE NATION TOGETHER AS

THE COMMON VICTIMS OF SOCIAL DECLINE AND ECONOMIC DEFEAT. THE SOUTHERN STRATEGY IS A GAMBLE THAT THE PEOPLE OF YOUR REGION CAN BE TRICKED AGAIN INTO VOTING AGAINST THEMSELVES.

BUT THE SOUTH HAS ANOTHER CHOICE--AND IT IS NOT A CHOICE CREATED SOLELY BEYOND SOUTHERN BORDERS. IN 1970, REUBEN ASKEW AND LAWTON CHILES CAMPAIGNED IN FLORIDA BY SPEAKING TO SHARED ASPIRATIONS INSTEAD OF SEPARATE SUSPICIONS. AND SIMILAR CAMPAIGNS WERE WAGED AND WON THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH. THEY POINT THE WAY, NOT TO A SOUTHERN STRATEGY, BUT TO AN AMERICAN STRATEGY. . .TO A POLITICS WHICH APPEALS TO THE REAL INTERESTS THAT UNITE PEOPLE, NOT THE COUNTERFEIT ISSUES WHICH DIVIDE THEM. THE AMERICAN STRATEGY OFFERS US THE CHANCE TO REACH ACROSS THE DIVERSITY AND GEOGRAPHY OF OUR NATION'S LIFE. AND IT OFFERS THAT CHANCE TO THE SOUTH.

I INTENDED TO TALK TONIGHT ABOUT THAT OPPORTUNITY BY FOCUSING FIRST ON THE ISSUE OF SUPREME COURT APPOINTMENTS. I INTENDED TO SAY HOW WRONG IT IS TO SEEK SOUTHERN SUPPORT BY STIRRING SOUTHERN ANGER. . .BY SELECTING SOUTHERNERS FOR THE COURT WHO ARE LIKELY TO BE TURNED DOWN BY THE SENATE. AND I INTENDED TO SAY THAT YOUR REGION IS SO MUCH BETTER THAN ANYONE WRONGLY CALLED REPRESENTATIVE OF YOU AND RIGHTLY CALLED NOT HIGHLY QUALIFIED BY THE AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION.

I STILL BELIEVE **THAT**. AND I STILL BELIEVE THAT THE SENATE WOULD CONFIRM ANY SOUTHERNER OR ANY AMERICAN LIKE LEWIS POWELL.

LAST NIGHT, THE PRESIDENT NOMINATED LEWIS POWELL. LAST NIGHT, FOR FIFTEEN MINUTES ON TELEVISION, THE PRESIDENT DID THE RIGHT THING WHEN HE TOLD US THAT LEWIS POWELL SHOULD SIT ON THE SUPREME COURT, NOT BECAUSE HE IS A VIRGINIAN, BUT BECAUSE HE IS AN EXCEPTIONAL LAWYER WHO HAPPENS TO BE FROM VIRGINIA.

IT WAS RIGHT TO STILL THE VOICE OF SECTIONALISM, ~~IF~~ ^{lack of qualification} ONLY FOR A MOMENT. IT WAS RIGHT TO RECOGNIZE THAT MEDIOCRITY IS NOT A REGION OF THE COUNTRY, BUT A CHARACTERISTIC OF SOME PEOPLE. AND IT WAS RIGHT TO RECOGNIZE THE STANDARD OF LEGAL EXCELLENCE WHICH THIS REGION BOASTS IN LEWIS POWELL. . .AND IN SO MANY OTHERS. . .LIKE FEDERAL JUDGE FRANK JOHNSON OF ALABAMA, STATE SUPREME COURT JUSTICE ALBERT TATE OF LOUISIANA, AND FEDERAL JUDGE DAVID DYER IN FLORIDA.

IN ALL HONESTY, I CANNOT TELL YOU THAT I FULLY AGREE WITH LEWIS POWELL'S JUDICIAL PHILOSOPHY. BUT HE APPEARS TO STAND OUT AS AN AMERICAN, A SOUTHERNER, AND A LAWYER TRULY WORTHY OF THE RESPONSIBILITY THE PRESIDENT HOPES TO GIVE HIM.

THE SENATORS WHO VOTED AGAINST EARLIER SOUTHERN NOMINEES--AND I WAS AMONG THEM--WERE VOTING AGAINST THOSE INDIVIDUALS, NOT THIS REGION. WE WERE NOT ANSWERING A SOUTHERN STRATEGY WITH AN ANTI-SOUTHERN STRATEGY, BUT WITH AN AMERICAN STRATEGY. WE WERE INSISTING THAT THE ABLEST MEN AND WOMEN IN THE LAND SHOULD SIT ON THE HIGHEST COURT IN THE LAND--THAT ALL OUR PEOPLE HAVE A COMMON INTEREST IN THE QUALITY OF AMERICAN JUSTICE. AND THAT'S WHY THE PRESIDENT'S CHOICE OF LEWIS POWELL IS A HOPEFUL, ENCOURAGING, AFFIRMATIVE SIGN.

BUT AN AMERICAN STRATEGY CANNOT STOP HERE BECAUSE THE SOUTHERN STRATEGY DOES NOT STOP WITH THE VOICE OF SECTIONALISM. IT IS ALSO HEARD IN THE APPEAL TO FEAR. . .IN THE POLITICS WHICH TELLS US THAT PUBLIC LIFE IS A CONTEST BETWEEN THOSE WHO ARE SOFT ON CRIME AND THOSE WHO ARE STRONG FOR LAW AND ORDER.

BUT WE ARE ALL LAW AND ORDER LIBERALS -- OR LAW AND ORDER MODERATES -- OR LAW AND ORDER CONSERVATIVES. AND THE AIM OF AN AMERICAN STRATEGY IS NOT TO SLANDER POLITICAL OPPONENTS AS ACCOMPLICES TO CRIME...BUT TO PLAN A SOCIETY IN WHICH EVERY CITIZEN TRULY CAN FEEL SECURE.

PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY OTHER SECTION, THE SOUTH RESPONDED TO HARD-LINE RHETORIC DURING THE 1968 CAMPAIGN. AND WHAT HAVE YOU GAINED? ARE YOUR NEIGHBORHOODS SAFER...ARE YOUR HOMES MORE SECURE ...ARE YOU LESS AFRAID OF A CASUAL WALK DOWN A NIGHT-TIME STREET... THAN YOU WERE THREE YEARS AGO? ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH A SOARING RATE OF DRUG ABUSE--NOT ONLY IN THE SLUMS--BUT IN OUR HIGH SCHOOLS AND AMONG OUR SOLDIERS? AND HOW CAN ANYONE BE SATISFIED WHEN 60,000 YOUNG AMERICANS SURVIVE VIET NAM, ONLY TO BE STRUCK DOWN BY THE LIVING DEATH OF HEROIN?

YOU REMEMBER THE PROMISE OF 1968 -- "TO RESTORE ORDER AND RESPECT FOR [YHR] LAW IN THIS COUNTRY." BUT IN 1969 AND AGAIN IN 1970, VIOLENT CRIME IN AMERICA CLIMBED BY 11%. IN THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 1971, VIOLENT CRIME IN THE SUBURBS WAS UP BY AN ASTOUNDING 17%. AND IN RECENT WEEKS, WORRIED OFFICIALS HAVE EVEN TRIED TO MAKE THEIR FAILURE LOOK AND SOUND LIKE SUCCESS.

WE HAVE BEEN TOLD ABOUT "A DECELERATING RATE OF [CRIME] INCREASE" BUT IF YOU FIGURE OUT THE TRICKY PHRASING, YOU WILL FIND THAT THE NUMBER OF CRIMES IS STILL RISING AT A NEAR RECORD PACE. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT THERE IS A BASIS FOR "CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM" -- BUT WHO CAN BE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT ANOTHER 11% INCREASE IN VIOLENCE BETWEEN JANUARY AND JULY?

NEXT YEAR FROM THE SOUTHERN STRATEGY, YOU WILL HEAR THAT THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE HARD LINE HAS NOT BEEN HARD ENOUGH. BUT THE GOVERNOR WHO TALKS THE TOUGHEST COMES FROM A STATE WHICH REGULARLY RANKS AMONG THE HIGHEST THIRD IN VIOLENT FELONIES.

SO OUR ONLY REAL HOPE IS A TRULY AMERICAN STRATEGY AGAINST CRIME.

WE NEED A STRATEGY WHICH WILL NOT IGNORE THE DEEPER CAUSES OF LAWLESSNESS IN THE STRUCTURE OF OUR SOCIETY. AND IT IS INSULTING TO SUGGEST THAT FLORIDA AND THE SOUTH DON'T CARE ABOUT THAT.

WE NEED STRATEGY THAT WILL NOT RELY ON REPRESSION...ON TACTICS LIKE THE "NO-KNOCK" LAW...WHICH HAS ACCOMPLISHED LITTLE MORE THAN TO SUBJECT A MIDDLE-AMERICAN GUN COLLECTOR IN MARYLAND TO A HAIL OF BULLETS, A LIFE OF PARALYSIS, AND A FALSE ARREST. AND IT IS INSULTING TO SUGGEST THAT THE SOUTH DOES NOT CARE ABOUT HIS CIVIL LIBERTIES.

AND WE NEED A STRATEGY AGAINST CRIME THAT WILL NOT ONLY DEAL WITH CAUSES, BUT WITH SYMPTOMS. AMERICA CANNOT WIN THE STRUGGLE FOR LAW AND ORDER IN A TELEVISION SPEECH ABOUT "THE PEACE FORCES AND THE CRIMINAL FORCES." WE WILL WIN OR LOSE ON THE STREETS AND IN OUR PRISONS AND ON COUNTLESS POLICE BEATS.

-- WE MUST FIGHT FOR MORE FEDERAL AID TO LOCAL POLICE...TO HIRE MORE MEN...TO GUARANTEE THEM BETTER PAY, BETTER EQUIPMENT, AND BETTER TRAINING.

-- WE MUST REFORM OUR COURTS...TO INSURE SPEEDY CONVICTION OF THE GUILTY AND SPEEDY RELEASE FOR THE INNOCENT.

-- AND WE MUST MAKE A VAST COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES TO AN EFFECTIVE AND HUMANE PENAL SYSTEM...WHERE PRISONS ARE PLACES FOR REHABILITATION INSTEAD OF CENTERS FOR SEXUAL ABUSE AND SCHOOLS FOR CRIME.

THIS KIND OF ACTION IS NOT THE WHOLE ANSWER TO CRIME IN OUR COUNTRY. BUT IT CAN MAKE A VITAL DIFFERENCE...A DIFFERENCE WE CAN MEASURE IN LIVES SAVED, IN PROPERTY PRESERVED, AND IN THE SIMPLE COMFORT OF FEELING SAFE.

WE COULD HAVE MOVED TOWARD ALL OF THAT THREE YEARS AGO. INSTEAD, THE COUNTRY HEEDED THE HARD-LINE RHETORIC -- NOT JUST IN THE SOUTH, BUT IN EVERY REGION. NOW AN AMERICAN STRATEGY MUST ANSWER THE REAL FEARS OF AMERICANS BY FORGING AN ALLIANCE WHICH CAN MAKE LAW AND ORDER A REALITY FOR PEOPLE INSTEAD OF A CODE WORD FOR PREJUDICE.

AND THAT ALLIANCE SHOULD NOT EXCLUDE ANY GROUP IN OUR SOCIETY. LAW AND ORDER IS NOT A BLACK VERSUS WHITE ISSUE. BLACK WOMEN ARE FIVE TIMES AS LIKELY AS WHITE WOMEN TO BECOME THE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE. AND BLACKS ARE AT LEAST AS LIKELY AS WHITES TO SUPPORT A FAIR AND EFFECTIVE ATTACK ON CRIME.

THOSE WHO PREFER THE HARD-LINE ARE DEPENDING ESPECIALLY ON THE SOUTH. SO THE SOUTH HAS A SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY. YOU MUST CHOOSE...FOR YOURSELVES AND PERHAPS FOR THE NATION. YOU MUST CHOOSE...A SOUTHERN STRATEGY OR AN AMERICAN STRATEGY.

AND IF YOU CHOOSE A STRATEGY WHICH SERVES EVERY AMERICAN, THERE IS SO MUCH WE CAN ACHIEVE...EVEN BEYOND JUDICIAL EXCELLENCE AND CRIME CONTROL.

TOGETHER, AMERICANS CAN WIN A STEADY PROSPERITY TO REPLACE GOVERNMENT BY IMPULSE...THE KIND OF GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS GIVEN US FOUR DIFFERENT ECONOMIC POLICIES SINCE 1969, AND 6% UNEMPLOYMENT IN 1971.

TOGETHER, AMERICANS CAN WIN THE FIGHT FOR DECENT MEDICAL CARE, ADEQUATE SOCIAL SECURITY, MORE HOUSING AND BETTER EDUCATION AND WELFARE REFORM...FOR THE ADVANCES WHICH ALONE CAN MAKE OUR COUNTRY AS GREAT AND AS GOOD AS IT CAN BE.

WE CAN WORK TOGETHER FOR ALL OF THIS BECAUSE ALL OF US HAVE A STAKE IN THE OUTCOME. AND OUR COMMON INTERESTS CAN PREVAIL IF WE RESPECT EACH OTHER. A COLLEGE STUDENT WITH LONG HAIR IS NOT A FREAK. A POLICEMAN WITH A CREW CUT IS NOT A PIG, BUT A HUMAN BEING. AND WHEN WE CANNOT COMPLETELY OVERCOME OUR DIFFERENCES -- IN THE COUNTRY OR IN A POLITICAL PARTY OR IN OUR OWN NEIGHBORHOODS -- AT LEAST WE CAN RESIST THE DESTRUCTIVE TEMPTATION TO TELL OTHERS THEY DON'T REALLY BELONG. THERE IS NO SATISFACTION IN THE RIGHTEOUS CONVICTION THAT EVERYONE ELSE IS WRONG...ONLY THE FRUSTRATION OF POWERLESS AND ISOLATED GROUPS AND REGIONS.

FUNDAMENTALLY, OUR AIM IS THE SAME. THOMAS WOLFE DESCRIBED IT THREE DECADES AGO: "TO EVERY MAN HIS CHANGE -- TO EVERY MAN, REGARDLESS OF HIS BIRTH, HIS SHINING GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY -- TO

EVERY MAN, THE RIGHT TO LIVE, TO WORK, TO BE HIMSELF, AND TO BECOME WHATEVER THING HIS MANHOOD AND HIS VISION CAN COMBINE TO MAKE HIM -- THIS...IS THE PROMISE OF AMERICA." AND THAT IS THE MEANING OF AN AMERICAN STRATEGY -- FOR WOMEN AS WELL AS MEN, BLACKS AS WELL AS WHITES, THE YOUNG AND THE OLD ALIKE.

IN THE NEXT YEAR, FLORIDA AND THE SOUTH WILL BECOME THE TESTING GROUND FOR THE AMERICAN STRATEGY. YOU DECIDED IN 1968 AND YOU WILL DECIDE IN 1972. AND YOU WILL DECIDE MORE THAN THE FATE OF A SPECIFIC CANDIDATE OR A PARTICULAR PARTY. YOU MAY WELL DETERMINE THE FUTURE AND THE FATE OF THE COMMON ENTERPRISE WE CALL AMERICA.

THE SOUTH CANNOT AFFORD A SOUTHERN STRATEGY. FOR ONLY IF THE SOUTH RISES AGAIN CAN THE NATION RISE AGIN.

I HOPE THAT DOES NOT SOUND INAPPROPRIATE FROM ME. I HAVE TRIED TO SPEAK FRANKLY WITH YOU TONIGHT...NOT AS A NORTHERNER TO SOUTHERNERS...BUT AS AN AMERICAN TO HIS FELLOW AMERICANS.

THAT IS THE ONLY WAY WE CAN TALK WITH EACH OTHER.

AND ULTIMATELY, IT IS THE ONLY WAY WE CAN LIVE TOGETHER.

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BLUE KEY BANQUET - UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA