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Speeches

Edmund S. Muskie Papers

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Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie in Coos Bay, Oregon

Edmund S. Muskie

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I HAVE COME TO COOS BAY TODAY TO SEE WHAT YOUR PROBLEMS ARE AND WHAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN DO ABOUT SOLVING THEM.

NOT IN A PUNITIVE WAY. I DON'T THINK THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD PUNISH A COMMUNITY, OR THREATEN A COMMUNITY.

BUT IN A CONSTRUCTIVE WAY -- TO TRY TO FIND THE RIGHT COMBINATION OF REGULATION AND ASSISTANCE, TO RESTORE THE STRENGTH OF YOUR ECONOMY, AND PRESERVE THE ECOLOGY, IN THIS BEAUTIFUL PART OF THE COUNTRY.

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ANOTHER REASON FOR MY VISIT: A YEAR FROM NOW THERE IS GOING TO BE A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. I MAY BE INVOLVED IN IT. YOU CERTAINLY WILL.

IT IS NOT TOO EARLY TO START PLANNING, THINKING, AND WORKING TOGETHER TO SET THIS COUNTRY ON THE RIGHT ROAD.

THE ECONOMY SHOULD NOT BE OUR ONLY ISSUE IN THE NEXT ELECTION.

ECONOMIC POWER IS JUST THE MEANS FOR IMPROVING OUR SCHOOLS, FEEDING THE HUNGRY AND FILLING THE LONG-STANDING SOCIAL NEEDS OF AMERICA.

BUT IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE ECONOMY, THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION HAS GIVEN US ASSURANCES RATHER THAN ACTION.

YOU HAVE HAD MORE THAN YOUR SHARE OF PROBLEMS HERE BECAUSE THE ADMINISTRATION CHOSE TO MAKE THE HOUSING INDUSTRY, AND THUS THE LUMBER INDUSTRY, THE POINT OF THE LANCE IN THE TILT AGAINST THE DRAGON OF INFLATION.

IN 1969, UNDER THE REAL PHASE ONE OF THE PRESIDENT'S ECONOMIC PROGRAM, THE PRIME RATE OF INTEREST WAS RAISED TO EIGHT AND ONE-HALF PERCENT -- THE HIGHEST RATE IN THE HISTORY OF OUR COUNTRY.

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THE HOUSING INDUSTRY, THEN THE LUMBER INDUSTRY, AND THEN OTHER INDUSTRIES BEGAN TO SLIDE.

THE PRESIDENT ADMITTED HE WAS FOLLOWING A POLICY OF ~~CONTRACTION~~ IN 1969. BUT HE SAID THAT 1970 WOULD BE "A GOOD YEAR ECONOMICALLY."

HE WAS WRONG. IN 1970, THE STOCK MARKET COLLAPSED AND THE RECESSION BEGAN. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TEN YEARS, THERE WAS NO REAL INCREASE IN THE INCOME OF THE AVERAGE AMERICAN WORKER.

IN 1970, THE PRESIDENT SAID 1971 WOULD BE "A GOOD YEAR." AND 1971 WOULD BE A "GREAT YEAR."

IT IS NOT A GOOD YEAR IN OREGON, WHERE UNEMPLOYMENT HAS BEEN WELL OVER FIVE PERCENT THROUGH MOST OF THE YEAR.

OR IN COOS BAY, WHERE IT IS OVER 8 PERCENT.

AND ABOUT NEXT YEAR, NO ONE REALLY KNOWS. BUT A WORKING MAN CANNOT LIVE ON PROMISES. SIR FRANCIS BACON ONCE SAID THAT "HOPE IS A GOOD BREAKFAST, BUT A LEAN SUPPER." THESE HAVE BEEN LEAN TIMES.

WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

IS IT NECESSARY FOR THE LUMBER INDUSTRY TO HAVE THREE BAD YEARS IN ORDER TO HAVE ONE GOOD ONE?

IS IT SUFFICIENT, AS A NATION, TO HAVE AS A GOAL AN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE 40 PERCENT WORSE THAN WHEN THIS ADMINISTRATION TOOK OFFICE?

I DON'T BUY THAT.

THIS USED TO BE A COUNTRY WHERE A PERSON WHO WAS WILLING TO WORK COULD RISE ON MERIT ALONE. NOW, IF HIS COMPANY IS CUTTING BACK, IF PEOPLE ARE NOT BUYING AND INVESTING, HIS ABILITY TO IMPROVE HIMSELF DEPENDS UPON THE TIDES OF THE ECONOMY.

WE MUST CHANGE THIS, AND RETURN TO FIRST PRINCIPLES.

THE PRESIDENT OFFERS ASSURANCES, BUT NO REAL PROGRAMS.

HE HAS NO PROGRAMS WHICH HELP THE BLUE COLLAR WORKER, OR THE MIDDLE-CLASS AMERICAN, OR THE FARMER. HE HAS NOT REACHED THE YOUNG PEOPLE, OR THOSE AT THE BOTTOM OF OUR SOCIAL ORDER. THE ONLY WAY HE CAN WIN RE-ELECTION, IN MY JUDGMENT, IS THE WAY HE WAS ELECTED IN THE FIRST PLACE -- THROUGH THE DIVISION AND INERTIA OF OUR OWN PARTY.

BUT THIS TIME, WE'RE NOT GOING TO LET HIM DO IT.

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WE CAN WIN THIS ELECTION, AND GET ABOUT THE REAL TASKS OF LEADERSHIP AND OPPORTUNITY.

AND IF WE DO SO, WE WILL DESERVE THE VICTORY THAT THE EFFORTS OF ALL OF YOU CAN PRODUCE NEXT YEAR.

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