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## Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie in Marathon City, Wisconsin

Edmund S. Muskie

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SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE  
STREET SPEECH IN MARATHON CITY, WISCONSIN  
JANUARY 10, 1972

I don't know that we need to go anywhere else the rest of the day. We've got enough voters here.

Let me say first of all, thank you to the Mayor for his welcome, his official welcome to us here in Marathon. Secondly, to Congressman Jay Molbe, who's been such a good friend to me and to you, his people, in the Congress in Washington. (Pause) Yes, come on, let's give him a hand. (Applause) You know, congressmen need votes as well as presidential candidates, and I want to be sure that he gets enough this next time to go back to the Congress. You need him, and I hope that I need him. (Applause)

Then I'd like to present, just to take a bow, a young lady who's traveling with me. She's my middle daughter. School happens to be out this week for her . . . as well as for some of you here in this crowd. My daughter, Melinda. (Applause) She isn't ready to make speeches yet. She'll have to get used to that.

But let me, on behalf of myself, say "thank you" to all of you for turning out so warmly and hospitably to say hello to a Yankee from the Northeastern part of our country. We've had a long day already; we started out in Miami this morning, we stopped off in Springfield, Illinois, to visit with Senator Stevenson. . . looking forward to our visit at the end of the day here and in Milwaukee.

A while ago one of the young men in the crowd seemed to want to ask me a question. He couldn't quite bring himself to do so. So one of his friends said, "What he wants to ask you is, why are you running for President?" I said, "Well, that's a good question. I'll think about it."

Well, as I look at the surface similarities between this little town in central Wisconsin and my little towns up in Maine, I'm impressed first of all, as I am over and over again, by the things that Americans share in common. Now, it seems very evident here, in a little town in Wisconsin and a little town in Maine; but it goes beyond that, because many different kinds of Americans, who seem different from each other, also share a great many things in common. And if there's a single answer to that question, "Why

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are you running for President?" it is this: that I hope that I can find a way to make it clear to Americans of all descriptions, in all areas of the country, that what they share in common is much more important than their differences.

This is a lesson we've learned over much of our national history; it's a lesson we've forgotten in recent years. But it's a lesson that is well worth re-learning. I think we can. I think Americans want to do so, and I think they're looking for the leadership which will take them in that direction, and that, really, I think, ought to be the principal test of this political campaign year.

But I come here for other purposes than these. People ask me why I come to a little town like this. I come to little towns like this, in part, of course, because my own heritage lies in little towns like this; but also because I know little towns like this face problems here in Wisconsin as they do in Maine.

Maine isn't thought of as a farming state, largely because our farmers haven't been the beneficiaries of farm programs in recent years. The last farm program that had any direct impact upon Maine farmers was the Potato Support Program of almost 20 years ago. That failed. It didn't work. And yet we still have people trying to make a living on the farm, trying to build up their rural communities, trying to save the values that have always made small town living and farm life so important to so many Americans. And we want to see that continued, and protected, and even revitalized and revived.

So I'm interest in coming into the small, rural areas of America, as well as the big cities, because I think the problems of each are connected. I think it's important to the citizens of Milwaukee that the dairy farmers of Marathon make a decent living, here on the land, and from their herds, and out of their labor. I don't think it's possible for a politician to understand your problems unless he's come here to get first-hand some feel of what it's like to milk a cow in 25 below zero weather.

You know, we have an old story in Maine that I used to use in response to the kind of warm greeting that you gave me here this morning. It's the story of a farm. . . of a cow on a cold, frosty morning. When the farmer came in to milk her she turned to him and said, "Thank you for the warm hand." (Laughter and applause)

So although I've never lived on the farm myself, my father did, in Russian-occupied Poland -- 60 or 70 years ago. But it was never my privilege to live on the farm, but I lived in the small town that was close to the farm. And so I came to learn something of how hard it is, and yet how important it is, to work on the farm and to preserve its values. And I think these ought to be concerns to the national government in Washington.

I think one of the real failures of this administration in Washington is the failure of the President to understand that farmers ought to be in the highest councils of this government in Washington. Indeed, I have said that the Secretary of Agriculture ought to be a farmer. Now I understand that's kind of a revolutionary thought. It hasn't been thought of for a long time. When we talk about the Department of Labor, it's rather logical that people then talk about having someone from the ranks of labor as Secretary of Labor. But it's been a long time since we had a farmer as Secretary of Agriculture, and I think the time has come to repeat that.

I think it's time also that a President had a farm program. (Applause) I think it's time also that a President represent, or remember, the promises he made to farmers when he ran for office three years ago. (Applause)

Now, what I want to talk to some of your representatives and your leaders here in the next hour or two is some of the specifics about these problems.

In Maine, our dairy farming is different than yours. We don't have a federal marketing order. But nevertheless, the problems of dairy farmers when I was first elected Governor -- 17 years ago -- were of great concern to me. And although they operate under a different system, the problem is the same -- price. Price is the answer to the farmer's problem. (Applause)

If we can find a way -- and it seems to me we have the way, between now and April first, by setting 90% parity between now and April first -- we have the way of setting prices that give you a fair shake at the income you need to operate your farms, and to feed and educate your families, and to support your community. That's not an unreasonable request for any group of Americans to make. And unfortunately, farmers have been making it too long and have not been listened to, have not been heeded, and have not gotten a response. And I promise you that if I am given the responsibility, I'll try to meet it, from your point of view.



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There's another issue that concerns you here, in the farm areas of this country, and I'm wholly with you on this. I think it's important to preserve the family farm. I understand, of course, that the curve has gone down for a long, long time; and that there's a strong trend now to bring big business onto the farm, onto the land. I say that's an undesirable trend, in terms of the interests of the country as a whole. I think it's a trend that's got to be stopped, and I think we've got to develop national policy designed to stop that trend. I think that the prospect of the ownership of our lands falling increasingly into fewer and fewer hands, whether you call it "corporate farming" or "conglomerate farming," or anything else, is a result to be distrusted and resisted and fought, not only by the farmers of America, but by Americans as a whole. (Applause)

There's legislation pending in the Congress to deal with this problem. I co-sponsored it. It's been introduced by leaders such as Congressman Obey, and Senator Nelson, here in Wisconsin, and they deserve my support, and they're going to get it. And if I go on to the White House, they'll get my support there as well.

Incidentally, that takes me to an important point. I've come here for another reason. I think one of the great issues that face our country today is the question of whether government, and leaders, can be believed. This isn't an idea I dreamed up; this isn't an issue I created; but this, I sense, is a very strong concern among Americans of all descriptions. They want to believe in their leaders. They want to believe in their government. And unfortunately, too many Americans no longer believe.

I know of only one way to give you the evidence upon which to base a judgment as to the credibility or the believability of those of us who seek the Presidency. I think the only way I can do it effectively is to come here, let you look me in the eye, let you shake my hand, let you listen to me, and decide whether or not I'm the kind of a man you can believe. I don't ask you to make that judgment now, but I ask you to make it between now and the Wisconsin primary. And then I'll ask you to make it again between then and the Democratic convention in July. And then I'll ask you to make it again between then and next November. Because if I'm not the man to rekindle the confidence that Americans have in their leaders and their government in our best years as a nation, then I'm not the man who ought to be the next President of the United States. Because I think that this is going to be the number one challenge of the

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next President: to re-establish the believability of government, its purposes, its policies and its programs, in terms of the day-to-day problems of our people, whoever they are. Now, that's the principal reason that I am here with you this noon. (Applause)

I know that you've got to know specifically what I think about specific problems. And what I don't know about these problems today I'll learn, so that between now and the time you have to vote, you can get from me a specific position on the issues that are of concern to you. But what I'm saying is that it won't do you any good to have me say the right words to you if you can't believe me after the words have been said. So you've got to find your own way of testing me. Is this guy believable? Can he be trusted? Is he really committed to what he's saying? That's the question you've got to ask, and you must ask it not only with respect to me, but everyone of that long list of Democratic candidates, which makes your job more complicated. But you've got to do it, and then you've got to do it when we've got the horse race next -- next Fall.

That's what I ask you to do; and I ask you to do it not for me, but for our country. Because if we can establish this confidence between government and our people once again, there isn't a problem we face, including yours here in the rural, agricultural areas of Wisconsin, there isn't a problem we can't deal with. Our history tells us that. Our history tells us that when Americans believe in each other, when they believe in their leaders, when they believe in their government, in their country. . . there isn't anything beyond their reach. That's the state we've got to reach once more in our country. (Applause)

Well, like all Senators, including yours, I tend to get wordy and tend to filibuster. But I'll be back in Wisconsin, and I'm sure I'll be back in Marathon again between now and the Wisconsin primaries. But you'll be hearing me. You'll be reading my words, listening to me on the tube. Do it with what I've said to you in mind, and I think that together we can do what needs to be done between now and next November, and that is to elect a new President of the United States. (Applause)

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