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Press Release - Muskie Votes for McGovern-Hatfield Amendment

Edmund S. Muskie

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IMMEDIATELY
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MUSKIE VOTES FOR McGOVERN-HATFIELD AMENDMENT

Senator Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) today voted for the McGovern-Hatfield amendment to the military procurement bill, saying that it was "time to make clear our commitment to end the war in Vietnam."

The Senator said the McGovern-Hatfield amendment, of which he was also a co-sponsor, would have made the American commitment clear as well as preserving "all of the President's Constitutional powers."

Senator Muskie said that although this amendment failed, legislators opposed to the war must not give up their efforts. The Senator's "declaration of peace" resolution, which would set up a timetable for American withdrawal from Vietnam, has been referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The resolution was introduced in the Senate May 11.

In a floor statement yesterday, Senator Muskie said, "The cardinal issue is whether our involvement in the conflict in Indochina must be regarded as open-ended and indefinite in duration, or whether the time has come to establish a definite deadline for our military participation there."

Senator Muskie added that "the advantages of a clear-cut withdrawal policy would be substantial, not only in terms of our own domestic concerns, but in terms of peace in Vietnam itself."

"Control of our conduct would clearly be in our hands, not those of the North Vietnamese or the South Vietnamese. And a climate for meaningful negotiations might finally be established."

"The Administration has argued that a publicly-announced withdrawal timetable would give Hanoi no incentive to negotiate seriously in Paris," Senator Muskie said. "But the negotiations are already at a virtual standstill and there seems to be no prospect for improvement so long as Vietnamization remains our only policy."

Senator Muskie refuted the argument that a withdrawal timetable would lead eventually to a bloodbath in Vietnam. "Nothing in our present policy can guarantee against the possibility of reprisals once we are out of Vietnam in any event... Besides, is it not clear that the war itself is a bloodbath and that this certainty must be weighed against any speculative possibility?"

Senator Muskie said that "on matters we most care about--the return of our men held as prisoners of war and the safety of our troops as we withdraw--there is every likelihood of reaching an understanding with Hanoi once we indicate our willingness to set a firm date for our withdrawal."