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## **Press Release - Muskie Urges Press and Politicians to Shun Cheap Headlines and Distortions**

Edmund S. Muskie

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# MUSKIE

Maine

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FOR RELEASE

6 p.m. EDT  
September 19, 1970

## MUSKIE URGES PRESS AND POLITICIANS TO SHUN CHEAP HEADLINES AND DISTORTIONS

Senator Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) told the New England Press Association today that "all too often, the quality of the political dialogue in American election campaigns is a disgrace to the Republic."

In remarks prepared for the association's convention in Portland, Maine the Senator said that, judging from its early signs, the current campaign is likely to reinforce that judgment.

"Consider some of the manifestations," he told the association:

"--The reaching out for a 'cheap' headline in order to attract attention;

"--The distortion of an opponent's views in order to make them more vulnerable to attack;

"--The shaping of campaign advertising to play upon the emotions of a voter and divert his attention from the merits of an issue."

As the campaign progresses, Mr. Muskie said, "and as its tempo escalates, the total impression is of raucous voices, flashing images, meaningless phrases and total confusion.

"Is there no way for politicians to treat their constituents as rational human beings who would truly like to know the pros and cons of every issue?

"Is there no way for citizens to get a balanced exposure to the facts and the judgments which they should have to make intelligent decisions?

"Is it possible to generate such a campaign dialogue in such a way as to attract the attention and the interest necessary to assure a turnout at the polls?

"Such a way will not be found unless you and we find it."

Senator Muskie said that politicians indulge these campaign practices "in order to get news coverage and they are persuaded to do so by the response of the press to such tactics as against the more rational approach.

"The fact is that the charge and counter-charge kind of campaign does get more headlines. The fact is that the smear does get more space in the daily paper, more time on the air. The fact is that the rougher and nastier a campaign becomes, the more attention it does get from the press."

The challenge shared by press and politicians "is to elevate the level of political dialogue to the uplifting clash of ideas, the illuminating crossfire of constructive and intelligent disagreement, the clear identification of the choices available to the voter," Senator Muskie said.

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