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## Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie in East Chicago, Indiana

Edmund S. Muskie

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REMARKS BY SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE

MARCH 16, 1972

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This week, a thousand miles from here, the best instincts of American life suffered a stunning defeat. No one who believes in justice can claim victory in the Florida primary. In that primary, the party of John Kennedy spoke with the voice of George Wallace. George Wallace won. . . America lost. . . and the Democratic Party lost.

There were those who waffled during the Florida campaign, competing with Wallace for a grip on the hard line, resting on the memory of their courage in another, easier time. Yet even they must know in their hearts that there can be no decent compromise with this worn-out demagogue. Justice is a seamless web. We are for it everywhere or we jeopardize it everywhere. And justice is in jeopardy when some of our leaders decide that they can fight George Wallace only by joining him.

I hate what George Wallace stands for. I stand against him because he is wrong about social justice -- because there is no excuse for silence in face of a man who still believes in "Segregation today, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever." I stand against him because he is wrong about economic justice -- because this preacher of prejudice is nothing more than a pretender to populism.

George Wallace says he stands for workers, family farmers, and average income Americans. The truth is that George Wallace has spent his entire time in public office in the service of special privilege.

Let's look at the facts.

-- Fact: George Wallace has raised taxes on consumers instead of taxes on profits -- and machinists and accountants in Alabama pay twice as high a percentage of their income in taxes as big business.

-- Fact: George Wallace is now fighting to reduce taxes on twenty-one million acres of timberland owned by wealthy out-of-state firms.

-- Fact: George Wallace tampered with the Alabama Constitution to shield corporations from the increased taxes everyone else was asked to pay.

. --Fact: George Wallace fought to remove vast tracts of private property from state property tax rolls.

--Fact: At the end of the last Wallace administration, a national newsmagazine concluded: "In no other state of the Union is the tax structure so rigged against the urban working man..." as in George Wallace's Alabama.

George Wallace's friends are not in the factories or small businesses of this land. His friends are in the wood-panelled boardrooms of corporate power. And just as Richard Nixon's Southern Strategy is a mirror image of George Wallace's racism, so also is the Nixon favoritism for the special few a mirror image of the Wallace giveaways to big business. We have seen the Wallace record on economic justice. Look now at the record of this administration.

Under Richard Nixon, a worker with an industrial accident claim and a driver with an auto insurance claim continue to wait for years before a settlement or even a trial--but a corporate director can walk in a side door and ask for an immediate hearing from the Deputy Attorney General.

Under Richard Nixon, ITT receives permission for a merger after a contribution to the Republican convention--and major monopolies receive a holiday from anti-trust prosecution, even as the President asks their executives to contribute to a \$30 million Republican campaign fund.

Under Richard Nixon, we have seen a \$78 billion tax cut for big business--interest rates which benefit the wealthy and burden the homeowner--and deal after deal negotiated in secret by former political managers who appear to have forgotten their change in occupation.

Since 1969, the Department of Justice has become the Department of Politics, and the White House has become a clubhouse for influence peddlers. Richard Nixon once promised to speak for the majority who are forgotten Americans. Instead, Richard Nixon has served the few who are privileged Americans.

This is an issue worthy of a political campaign in a country committed to government by and for the people. This is an issue that touches the poor, the worker, and the middle class. This is an issue that goes to the heart of our direction and our future...whether America can be fair as well as prosperous...whether we can live up to the oldest American dream, that somewhere on this planet there can be full justice for every member of a society.

Our history and our heritage teach us that the things which unite us are stronger than the things which divide us. Nowhere is this clearer than in the fight for economic justice.

I want to lead that fight -- as a candidate and as President of the United States.

As President, I will fight to reform federal taxes. It isn't fair when Standard Oil pays a lower percentage of its income in taxes than most of you, or when a hundred millionaires pay no income taxes at all. It isn't fair when property taxes continue to climb at an astronomical rate. It isn't fair when the tax system protects special privilege to such an extent that we now read ads for tax shelters addressed to "Mr. and Mrs. Fortunate Taxpayer."

I am determined to change this system. I have proposed a reduction in payroll taxes for 85% of America's families. I have proposed a tax cut for consumers instead of corporations. I have proposed property tax relief and reform. And last week, I served notice that I will fight against \$14 billion in annual tax giveaways to big business.

This kind of action is a vital step toward economic justice -- but it is only a first step. As President, I will also fight to make federal regulatory decisions subject to constant scrutiny by the press and the people. We can put an end to secret conferences and back room deals, where private gain often carries far more weight than the nation's welfare. No regulatory official should be permitted to meet with interested parties unless the meeting is public and a public record is issued. Correspondence and phone calls from outside the agency should be noted and described on the public record. And no citizen should ever again be forced to rely on Jack Anderson for the truth about government decisions.

We can reform the tax system -- which I have been fighting for since 1959. We can open regulatory agencies to public view -- which I have fought for in the past. And we can and we must do more to redistribute wealth and power in America.

We must break the hammerlock of powerful corporations on business and commerce. Two hundred of our largest firms already control two-thirds of our industrial assets -- and if the Nixon administration has its way, even more of our resources will end up in even fewer pockets. In ~~one~~ of our vital industries, the four leading firms now account for 80% of all sales. In 1921, there were eighty-eight automobile manufacturers. Today, the Big Three produce 97% of all domestic cars sold in the United States. The results of this concentration are staggering.

A mere handful of auto executives can consciously co-operate to prevent price competition, to delay safety devices, and to evade pollution controls. In virtually every industry, the decision of a single, distant Board of Directors to make "a minor adjustment" can wipe out the economy of an entire town.

It is time to restore free enterprise to a central place in American life. As President, I will fight against the monopolies and the mergers that fix prices, destroy jobs, diminish competition, and buy influence over our public officials and our lives.

Of course, every presidential candidate since Theodore Roosevelt has pledged vigorous anti-trust action. And too often, between the rhetoric and the reality, we have seen the long shadow of special interest penetration into government. It is not enough to promise the appointment of dedicated trust-busters in the Justice Department or to outline procedural revisions-- though all of this is important and I would do it. We must also move beyond the fallible discretion of any President and any Attorney General to a hard and fast rule against the expansion by merger of at least the 200 largest corporations in America. These industrial giants should be forbidden by law from acquiring another firm unless they divest themselves of assets of equivalent value. We have discovered in the ITT case how easy it is for Wall Street to talk to the White House. We must make sure that, in the future, the White House will be deaf to such claims for special favors.

In recent days, I have talked about leadership for a change. And it is the task of leadership in 1972 to set before the American people great issues such as economic justice. Richard Nixon does not lead when he becomes the ally of private privilege. George Wallace does not lead when he cloaks his record as an economic royalist behind a stream of code-words. And no candidate can lead by appealing to separate interest groups with separate plans to tinker with a system desperately in need of fundamental reform.

What is at stake in 1972 is our chance to change America. We have lost it before. . . in the Congressional deadlock of the early 1960s. . . and in the decision to fight a senseless and immoral war that the Nixon administration still refuses to end.

There are those who say that we must surrender again our chance for change.

There are those who say that George Wallace will be a power broker or even a nominee at the Democratic convention.

And there are those who say that we should meet George Wallace half-way. . . which will leave the American people with a choice between a Republican Nixon and a Democratic Nixon.

I cannot stand by while this happens to our country and our party. I cannot stand by while some men trade their convictions for an empty political victory. For I am running in 1972 -- not merely to change Presidents -- but to change the country. I am running because I believe that we can reach across the ancient barriers of fear to the bonds of common interest. Whether the question is a war on the other side of the world or a corporate fix in Washington, we can reach out and unite Americans in the struggle for justice. We can appeal to their best instincts and their true self-interests. And in 1972 we can do better than adhering to Disraeli's sad definition of leadership: "There go the people; I must follow them."

Across Florida, I saw Wallace billboards which urged voters to "send them a message."

Now I want the rest of the country to send George Wallace a message.

Give me your help -- and we will send George Wallace a message that he was wrong when he long ago predicted that the race issue would determine the future of American politics.

Give me your help -- and we will send the message that Robert Kennedy was right when he told us during the 1968 Indiana primary: ". . . We know what we must do. It is to achieve true justice among our fellow citizens. The question is not what programs we should seek to enact. The question is whether we can find in our midst and in our hearts the leadership that (will teach us). . . to discover our own advancement in the search for the advancement of all."

This is still our task in 1972.

Let history record that we, in this generation, met the challenge.

Let history record that what we gave America was not fear or retreat -- but leadership for a change.