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Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie at the Westchester County Democratic Dinner

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REMARKS BY SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE
WESTCHESTER COUNTY DEMOCRATIC DINNER - NEW ROCHELLE, N.Y.
SATURDAY, APRIL 8, 1972

47th
For the ~~thirty-eighth~~ time in the history of this country, Americans are engaged in the process of choosing a President. We are meeting tonight because each of us is deeply committed to that process. Yet our own intense involvement in the politics of 1972 may sometimes blind us to the deeper meaning of our efforts. In the frenetic reach for attention and votes. . . in the frantic search for the funds and the percentages to keep going. . . we too often lose sight of our ultimate purpose in this campaign. Our purpose is as old as the Democratic Party itself: To build a government that truly serves our people. Every issue we debate. . . every program we propose. . . and the results of every primary should remind us of what we truly are.

We seek to reform an economic system which pads the profits of huge corporations, while millions of Americans suffer the pains of unemployment and inflation. We did not choose this issue. The American people chose it for us. They are tired of paying higher prices month after month, while their wages buy less today than they did a year ago. They are angry that Phase II now operates openly in favor of big business, while they are forced to borrow or to use their savings just to pay the monthly bills. They are angry that the nightly news reports no change in unemployment, while giant industries win an \$80 billion tax cut over the next ten years.

They have a right to be angry. And as we seek to respond. . . as every candidate labors to find new answers that will win support. . . we are also planning the economy of the 1970's. I am committed to controlling inflation by controlling prices. I am committed to a specific six point program to guarantee full employment in America. And the Democratic Party must make the same commitment in 1972.

Richard Nixon cannot compete with our proposals. He owes too much to corporate America, which financed his election, and forms the backbone of the Republican Party. He can only attempt to match Democratic programs with White House public relations. He can only create the illusion of progress. He can only offer catchy slogans like the "new prosperity" and sudden surprises on television which will not put people to work or hold prices down.

The Democratic Party has only one constituency: The American people. That is the real difference between the parties in this election. That is the real meaning behind the rhetoric and the excitement of the primaries. And that is the ultimate reason why it will be a Democratic President who takes the oath of office in January of 1973.

- 2 -

We also seek to reform a tax system which shelters the wealthy, favors the influential, and leaves the rest of us with an unfair burden. The issue of tax reform does not belong to any single candidate. It belongs to the American people, who made it their issue in 1972. They're not satisfied when local property taxes drive people out of their homes while the quality of public education declines. They're not satisfied when a factory owner can write off the cost of his sixty-five foot boat, while a factory worker has to put in overtime to buy an outboard motor for his rowboat. They're not satisfied when U.S. Steel in 1971, and over a hundred millionaires in 1970, paid no income taxes at all, while millions of Americans can't even save enough for retirement.

This year, the American people are standing up to a tax system that refuses to ask the wealthy what they can do for their country. The American people are standing against a tax system that tells them to pay not only their share, but Standard Oil's share, too. And the Democratic Party must stand with them. I have proposed a twenty-five billion dollar reform in the federal tax structure. It includes a ten billion dollar reduction in payroll taxes for 85% of America's families. It includes a billion dollar housing security program to help the aged pay property taxes and a six billion dollar Quality Education Guarantee to relieve the property tax burden on our homeowners. I will close the loopholes that are tailor made for the rich and the powerful.

Can Richard Nixon compete with these sweeping reforms? Of course not. The money he saves for the rich is going right into his campaign chest, as the ex-Secretary of Commerce calls on big business to pay its debt to the Nixon Administration. The President is reported to have at least a \$20 million campaign fund -- and no wonder -- for he has not proposed a single major tax reform.

The Democratic Party is the party of the people. We are pledged to tax reform. And we will keep our pledge in 1973.

We also seek to reform our governmental system -- a system that too often opens its doors only to the influential, and closes its mind to the will of the American people. No Democrat invented the issue of populism in this campaign. That is the issue because of what our people see around them. They see Vietnam veterans waiting months for help from the Veterans administration, while a corporate executive can pick up the phone and talk with a Deputy Attorney General at any time. They see ITT's money apparently influencing the highest offices of government. They see the Department of Justice turned into a Department of Politics. They see a handful of businesses dominating our economy, poisoning our environment, and victimizing our consumers. And they wonder whether Richard Nixon has forgotten that he is the President of a country, not the President of a corporation.

This is the meaning and the message of 1972: Our people are fed up with the great institutions -- public and private -- that run their lives without responding to their wishes. Now the Democratic Party must respond -- or the Democratic Party will lose because it will not deserve to win. I have demanded a federal law to stop the 200 largest companies in America from swallowing up local firms. I have proposed social security increases and low cost public housing instead of loans to Lockheed and space shuttles to send our money to the moon. I am fighting for tough laws to end water pollution -- and I have written every major environmental legislation passed by the Congress in the 20th century.

The polls tell us that Americans will listen to the rhetoric of populism. As we fight for their support in the primaries, we are also fighting for economic and social justice in America. We are fighting on the right side. . . against a President who speaks of the "silent majority," but works for a privileged minority.

We want employment without inflation. We want meaningful tax reform. We want a government that serves the public interest. We want an end to the war in Vietnam. And we want a new beginning here at home. We seek these reforms, not just to secure the votes of our people, but to help secure their lives. We seek them, not just as competing candidates, but as a Party. . . the Democratic Party. We stand with Franklin Roosevelt. . . with Harry Truman. . . and John Kennedy. We stand where they stood, looking forward. And we want the chance to move our country forward. We stand in the tradition of our party. . . which has always been the party of the American people.

I believe in the purpose of the Democratic Party. I believed in it 18 years ago, when I became the first Democratic Governor of Maine in a decade. I believed in it 13 years ago, when I became the first Democrat ever elected to the Senate from Maine. And because I believe in our party's purpose now, even more as an underdog than as a frontrunner, I will fight for the Democratic nomination until the last delegate casts his vote.

As this campaign continues. . . as the field narrows and the competition grows more intense, let no Democrat forget who we are and what we stand for. We are working together in 1972. We are writing the Democratic platform. We are fighting to build a more decent and just society. And if we remember that, we will elect the next President of the United States.

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