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Statement by Senator Edmund S. Muskie on the Environmental Budget Requests by the Administration

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Statement by Senator Edmund S. Muskie
On the Environmental Budget Requests by the Administration
February 3, 1970

The President's expressions of concern over the environmental crisis were helpful in the battle against air, water, and land pollution. However, the budget that the President proposed yesterday does not reflect the sense of urgency which he expressed in his State of the Union message.

The President apparently has abandoned the promises he made less than two weeks ago.

Congress has authorized \$1.25 billion for the construction of water pollution treatment facilities for fiscal 1971. The President has requested none of it. Instead, he has proposed a new plan--at the same level Congress appropriated for 1970, at a lower level than the plan authorized by the Congress in 1966, at a lower level than the plan which I have proposed for the next five years, and at a lower level than we can afford.

We have been asked to set the water pollution control programs back another year, to accept another year of promises for the future, to tolerate another year of deteriorating rivers and streams.

How long must we wait?

The Congress appropriated \$45 million for air pollution research for fiscal 1970, but the President has asked for \$27 million for fiscal 1971--less than last year and less than we can afford. The Congress appropriated \$64 million for the air quality standards program for fiscal 1970, but the President has requested \$79 million for fiscal 1971--much too small an increase.

We must double the pace of the standards-setting process, not stop it. We must attack every source of pollution, not some of them. We must eliminate delays in enforcement, not increase them.

How long must we wait?

The Congress appropriated \$14 million for the control of solid waste pollution in fiscal 1970, and the Administration has requested no more for fiscal 1971.

We must learn how to recover valuable resources which we now waste and dispose of our other wastes without polluting our land, our air, and our water. But we have been told that we cannot afford it.

How long must we wait?

The President has told us: --that there is room in the budget for \$275 million for the SST--but room for no more than \$14 million for the protection of our land.

--that there is room in the budget for \$3.4 billion for space--but for no more than \$800 million for the control of water pollution.

--that he has found room in the budget for \$2.3 billion for atomic energy--but for no more than \$106 million for the control of air pollution.

The President has not escalated the battle against pollution. He has retreated from goals which the Congress has already set.

The President has submitted a balanced budget to the Congress, but it is a balanced budget which reflects unbalanced priorities. It is one step forward and two steps back.

Fighting inflation is a battle of the highest priority, but the Administration has chosen to fight that battle at the expense of our air, our water, our land, and our people.

Do most Americans feel that the SST, space exploration, the ABM, and atomic energy are more important than our air, our water, our land, our homes, and our health? These are the kinds of decisions that the Administration has made. They are not decisions with which America can survive.

It is a sham to say that we cannot afford the protection of our environment, the fight against hunger and poverty, or homes and medical care for our people. We can afford these domestic programs--and fight the battle of inflation--if we admit that we cannot afford other programs which are much less important.

We need some things, and we do not need others. It is time we understood the difference and made our nation's budget reflect that understanding.