

Bates College

**SCARAB**

---

Congressional Records

Edmund S. Muskie Papers

---

9-14-1968

## **Press Conference - Norfolk, Virginia - On the 1968 Campaign and Party Differences**

Edmund S. Muskie

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scarab.bates.edu/mcr>

---

X

PRESS CONFERENCE  
HONORABLE EDMUND S. MUSKIE  
DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE  
TO BE  
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

-----

Norfolk, Virginia

September 14, 1968

**WARD & PAUL**  
OFFICIAL REPORTERS  
25 K STREET, N. E.  
Washington, D. C. 20002

(202) 628-4265

ASH:j

Phone (Area 992) 628-4266

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

**PRESS CONFERENCE**

---

**HONORABLE EDMUND S. MUSKIE,**

**DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE**

**TO BE**

**VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES**

---

WARD & PAUL

**5:30 p.m.**

**September 14, 1968**

**Golden Triangle Hotel**

**Norfolk, Virginia**

---

917 G St., N. W., Washington 1, D. C.

1           **QUESTION:** Senator, a week ago the Democratic State  
2 Central Committee extended an invitation to Vice President  
3 Humphrey to come to Virginia. Have you any word at all as to  
4 whether he will visit the state?

5           **SENATOR MUSKIE:** No, I don't. We have schedule-  
6 makers on each side to work with each other, and we are not  
7 always sure what results we achieve. I would hope he could  
8 come. I know he would be welcome, from the welcome I have  
9 received. But I really don't know what the possibilities  
10 are.

11           **QUESTION:** Senator, how would you sum up your feelings  
12 after the first week of official campaigning?

13           **SENATOR MUSKIE:** Oh, there is a lot of work to do.

14           **QUESTION:** Do you feel it has been a successful week?

15           **SENATOR MUSKIE:** Yes. Of course, I have nothing to  
16 compare it to. I have never campaigned for national office  
17 before. But as a personal experience, I found it not much  
18 different than campaigning in my own state. People were  
19 just as hospitable or just as critical as they were in my own  
20 state. So I felt quite comfortable in that sense.

21           Secondly, the response, I think, for a relatively  
22 unknown Senator going into distant parts of the country was  
23 surprisingly warm and hospitable, and even enthusiastic in  
24 some places.

25           From a logistical point, I think everything went

1 fairly well. We were pretty much on time everywhere we went.  
2 So my staff operation worked very smoothly.

3 Now, whether or not the first week means that we are  
4 going to have a successful campaign is something that only  
5 time can tell. It is like dropping pebbles in the water all  
6 over the place, you hope eventually the ripples will spread  
7 all over and overlap and you will have a national constituency  
8 by November 5. We will have to wait and see.

9 QUESTION: Did you learn anything about the political  
10 mood of the country that you didn't know before you went on  
11 the trip?

12 SENATOR MUSKIE: Not really, there were no surprises.

13 QUESTION: You say there is a lot of work to do,  
14 sir. Are you suggesting that at this point Mr. Nixon is ahead?

15 SENATOR MUSKIE: There is always a lot of work to  
16 do in every political campaign, especially for a Senator who  
17 starts out, as I say, without a national constituency of his  
18 own. I was really speaking in a personal sense. I don't  
19 think by visiting several parts of the country in one week,  
20 even such widely separated places as Las Vegas and Hot Springs,  
21 and Missouri, and Indiana and Ohio, that you can get an  
22 accurate picture of what the country is going to do on  
23 November 5.

24 I don't think we can do any such thing. So I make  
25 no predictions based upon personal observations in the last

House (Am. 202) 628-4266

1 week.

2 QUESTION: Senator, do you plan any changes in your  
3 campaign, based on the first week? Any change in emphasis?

4 SENATOR MUSKIE: Well, Don, you have watched my  
5 campaign, so you know we try to respond to developments as  
6 they unfold, and we will do the same thing on a national basis,  
7 I think.

8 You begin first of all by trying to give people some  
9 idea of what you are, what your political philosophy is, what  
10 your approach to problems is, what your record is, how you  
11 think, how you analyze problems, what you propose to do.

12 So I think this personal pitch has to be made first;  
13 then, secondly, you undertake to present the issues as they  
14 develop in the campaign, and they are pretty sharp.

15 In Maine, we try to keep our cool in that respect,  
16 and not let it get overheated.

17 QUESTION: Senator, some say you have preference to  
18 working rural areas as opposed to metropolitan areas in your  
19 campaign. Do you have preference as such?

20 SENATOR MUSKIE: I have never had one. I didn't  
21 realize I had disclosed one.

22 QUESTION: National articles claim Mr. Humphrey  
23 would rather work the cities and have you work rural areas,  
24 sir.

25 SENATOR MUSKIE: Well, with all deference to national

WARD & PAUL

97 G S., N. W., Washington, D. C.

1 articles, they don't always give the whole story.

2 No, I think it is said that because of my ethnic  
3 background there is a place for me to campaign in the cities,  
4 especially some cities, because of what they call -- my  
5 lantern jaw -- that perhaps I carry the rural image enough  
6 so I can campaign in rural areas as well. Everybody has got  
7 a different reason why I should go one place or another, and  
8 I am happy to listen to all of them and go where I think I  
9 can do the most good.

10 QUESTION: What effect do you think it will have on  
11 your campaign that neither of you are from the South or from  
12 a border state?

13 SENATOR MUSKIE: I have never seen a man yet who  
14 could in his own personal background represent all areas of  
15 the country. So I hope we have reached the point in our  
16 national development that we can measure candidates in terms  
17 of what they are, what they represent, and what they propose  
18 to do, and their qualifications for office.

19 This, after all, has been the ultimate objective of  
20 our kind of society, to so blend many different kinds of  
21 people that they become one in spite of their diversity and  
22 then they can begin to evaluate each other, independent of  
23 region, independent of place, independent of national origin,  
24 and all of the other things that make people different and  
25 maybe we can do it for once in this campaign.

I will tell you on November 6th.

QUESTION: Senator, did the addition of Governor Agnew of Maryland to Nixon's ticket help or hurt him, in your opinion?

SENATOR MUSKIE: Oh, I think Mr. Nixon is the best man to answer that question.

QUESTION: Do you have any opinion?

SENATOR MUSKIE: I would not be able to look at it from Mr. Nixon's point of view.

QUESTION: Senator, a Japanese correspondent quoted the skipper of the Pueblo last night as having said that if the United States does not accept moral responsibility for the crimes of the ship, it is possible that the skipper and the crew may be sentenced to death or life imprisonment in North Korea.

In view of this, sir, would you feel that the United States would be justified in coming out with some sort of apology at this time?

SENATOR MUSKIE: Well, I think if the circumstances and the facts justify an apology, that we ought to be willing to make it.

The difficulty has been to ascertain what the facts are, as I understand it. Now, I am not privy to the details of the discussions that have gone on in Panmunjom, but it is my impression that we have been trying to get the facts, or



Phone (Area 202) 678-6266

1 to arrange for some neutral or objective method of getting  
2 at the facts, so that we can determine what we ought to do as  
3 a nation in the light of the facts.

4 It is my impression that the mission did not require  
5 that the Pueblo breach territorial waters, that in order to  
6 do its work it did not need to breach territorial waters,  
7 that it had orders not to breach territorial waters, but  
8 whether under circumstances we can only speculate upon it may  
9 in fact have breached territorial waters is difficult to de-  
10 termine finally until you get some neutral atmosphere in which  
11 to get some facts from the crew, and from any objective evi-  
12 dence that is available.

13 I think this has been one of the sticky points in  
14 the negotiations, how we determine what the facts are.

15 QUESTION: Suppose they are sentenced to either life  
16 imprisonment or death. What do you think the national reac-  
17 tion would or should be?

18 SENATOR MUSKIE: Well, I think even if we had  
19 breached territorial waters, I would not think that that fact  
20 would justify that kind of action on the part of North Korea.  
21 And our reaction obviously would be one of great outrage.

22 QUESTION: Senator, Governor Agnew has stated an  
23 affirmation as to Abo Fortas' appointment. What is your po-  
24 sition, and what do you feel about Agnew's position on it?

25 SENATOR MUSKIE: Well, my position from the moment

WARD & PAUL

917 G St., N. W., Washington 1, D. C.

1 the appointment was announced, was on the face of Justice  
2 Fortas' record as a lawyer and as a judge, and his capacity,  
3 that the President was justified in appointing him and that  
4 we would be justified in confirming him.

5 Now, I don't know the basis of Governor Agnew's  
6 reaction at all, so I guess you would have to ask that part  
7 of the question of him.

8 QUESTION: Senator, what do you think the chances  
9 of the Democrats carrying this state this year are, consider-  
10 ing Mr. Nixon carried it in 1960, and George Wallace's  
11 candidacy?

12 SENATOR MUSKIE: I hope to get some insight into  
13 this while I am here and I welcome all informed observers who  
14 can guide me.

15 If you have an opportunity to give me some guidance,  
16 I would like to have it very much.

17 QUESTION: How do your research people rate the race  
18 in Virginia at this point?

19 SENATOR MUSKIE: Well, if I have research people  
20 making that kind of analysis, I don't know about it.

21 QUESTION: Senator, I would like to ask this: This  
22 morning --

23 SENATOR MUSKIE: I may say, a vice presidential  
24 candidate's entourage isn't quite that large.

25 QUESTION: Senator, in New York State the Liberal

1 party has nominated you for Vice President on a platform  
2 which calls for an immediate halt of the bombing in Vietnam.  
3 Have you responded to that nomination as yet, and do you plan  
4 to accept it?

5 SENATOR MUSKIE: I am aware of the nomination. I  
6 think I did accept it.

7 QUESTION: You did accept it? This won't cause you  
8 any problem?

9 SENATOR MUSKIE: Well, now, that puts me in a posi-  
10 tion, doesn't it, of standing on the Democratic Party plat-  
11 form and Liberal party platform, and I will guess I am going  
12 to do some bobbing.

13 Actually, however, if two different organizations  
14 choose to endorse a candidate for any office, organizations  
15 which have slightly different views about any issue, this  
16 doesn't necessarily mean that the candidate is inconsistent  
17 or hypocritical in accepting the nominations.

18 Because a lot of different people of different views  
19 endorse candidates. Senator Javits and Senator Thurmond both  
20 support Mr. Nixon and they have widely varying views on a  
21 great many things. I haven't heard Mr. Nixon reject the  
22 support of either one of them at this point.

23 So a lot of different people holding a lot of dif-  
24 ferent views on Vietnam, and the problems of the cities,  
25 support me, support Vice President Humphrey, support Mr.

1 Nixon, Mr. Agnew, and we are a country of diversity and if  
2 we are going to accept support only from those who have  
3 carbon copy views of our own, we are going to have small con-  
4 stituencies.

5 QUESTION: Senator Muskie, one of the big stories  
6 of this week, the first week of campaigning, was the charge  
7 made by your counterpart, Mr. Agnew, that Vice President  
8 Humphrey was "squishy soft" on communism. He later apologized  
9 for this, and Mr. Humphrey said he apparently had gotten  
10 ahold of some of Mr. Nixon's old speeches.

11 What do you think the reaction of this was on the  
12 country?

13 SENATOR MUSKIE: Well, obviously one that Governor  
14 Agnew didn't like.

15 QUESTION: Senator, some part of the polls and many  
16 of the Virginia politicians, including some Democrats, now  
17 see you and Mr. Humphrey running third in this state. If you  
18 assume that is true, what do you propose to do about it  
19 between now and November?

20 SENATOR MUSKIE: The same thing I would do if we  
21 were running first -- campaign as hard as I can to persuade  
22 the people of Virginia that they ought to support us.

23 QUESTION: Do you see it changing by November?

24 SENATOR MUSKIE: Well, I have never seen a political  
25 situation yet that stayed static from September to November.

1 QUESTION: Senator, we asked you to evaluate your  
2 campaign. I wonder if you could evaluate how you think the  
3 top of your ticket is doing, how Vice President Humphrey has  
4 been doing, either by your conversations with him or his  
5 staff or just by what you can judge?

6 SENATOR MUSKIE: Undiminished enthusiasm and  
7 optimism.

8 QUESTION: That is your assessment?

9 SENATOR MUSKIE: You asked me what I learned from  
10 my talks with him, and this is my impression -- undiminished  
11 enthusiasm and optimism.

12 QUESTION: How do you think his campaign is going  
13 in this first week?

14 SENATOR MUSKIE: Very well, I think. He has had  
15 his ups and downs like all of us do, and he thinks his ups  
16 have outnumbered his downs.

17 QUESTION: How much do you think George Wallace will  
18 hurt your ticket as opposed to hurting Nixon's?

19 SENATOR MUSKIE: Well, avoiding the temptation of  
20 flippancy, my evaluation of it at this point is mixed. For  
21 a long time, it was sort of the assumption that you would  
22 hurt the Republicans more than Democrats, or that he would  
23 hurt them in the southern states where this might be a very  
24 real value to us.

25 Now, I am in no position to second-guess that

1 judgment from my personal observations.

2 With respect to his growing visibility in northern  
3 states, so-called non-southern states, it is said that he is  
4 making inroads in the middle-class, among people who are very  
5 much concerned about law and order, and that this is likely  
6 to take votes from labor.

7 I don't yet know, and I don't think I have seen any  
8 analysis which indicates whether if this is so, the defec-  
9 tions to Wallace are coming from those segments of labor  
10 which traditionally are Republican, or whether they come from  
11 those segments which are traditionally Democratic, or whether  
12 they are mixed, and in what proportion. Because of that  
13 uncertainty, my evaluation at this point is mixed. I don't  
14 know. I haven't been able to get a fix on it.

15 But I would say that Wallace's campaign is an im-  
16 portant factor in this election and all parts of the country.  
17 It carries serious implications that people ought not to  
18 ignore on the assumption that is is meaningless. It is im-  
19 portant.

20 QUESTION: Do you think if Eugene McCarthy were to  
21 come out publicly and endorse you and Mr. Humphrey this would  
22 give an added bolster to your campaign?

23 SENATOR MUSKIE: Any expression of approval from  
24 Gene McCarthy would be heartwarming to me personally, and I  
25 am sure to Vice President Humphrey personally, and I am sure

1 it would be helpful.

2 QUESTION: Senator, how do you think you are going  
3 to do with the Virginia Democratic organization in light of  
4 Senator Byrd's recent criticism of Mr. Humphrey's statement  
5 on the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam, and also the fact  
6 that Virginia's Democratic organization has been known to  
7 kind of go to sleep, go into hibernation during the national  
8 campaigns?

9 SENATOR MUSKIE: Virginia democracy has a great  
10 tradition of independence and I don't expect to see Virginia  
11 abandon that tradition. I don't think necessarily that that  
12 is any clue as to what Virginia will do in an election campaign.

13 QUESTION: I am speaking, I mean, of the state or-  
14 ganization itself, the state chairman.

15 SENATOR MUSKIE: If you would identify the state  
16 organization for me, then I would try to ascertain what its  
17 disposition is in this respect. From the little I know,  
18 from the little I have been told about it, this isn't as clear-  
19 cut a picture as it might seem.

20 QUESTION: How about Congressman Abbitt, who is the  
21 state chairman? Have you received any expression from him?

22 SENATOR MUSKIE: I haven't sought one.

23 QUESTION: Do you think it would be logical for him  
24 being the state chairman of the party to offer one?

25 SENATOR MUSKIE: Logically, that kind has evaporated

1 in this election campaign.

2 QUESTION: Senator, did you talk to Senator McCarthy  
3 when you were in Washington yesterday?

4 SENATOR MUSKIE: I did a week ago or so. I am not  
5 sure he is still in Washington.

6 QUESTION: You did not?

7 SENATOR MUSKIE: No, I did not.

8 Thank you very much.

9 (Whereupon, the press conference was concluded.)

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

Phone (Area 202) 628-4266

WARD & PAUL

917 G St., N.W., Washington 1, D. C.