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## **Press Conference - San Francisco, California - On the 1968 Campaign**

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P R E S S   C O N F E R E N C E

REMARKS OF THE HONORABLE EDMUND S. MUSKIE  
DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE FOR THE VICE PRESIDENCY  
OF THE UNITED STATES

Thursday, September 19, 1968

San Francisco, California

**WARD & PAUL**

OFFICIAL REPORTERS

25 K STREET, N. E.

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PRESS CONFERENCE

REMARKS OF THE HONORABLE EDMUND S. MUSKIE

DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE FOR THE VICE PRESIDENCY OF THE UNITED STATES

- - -

Mayor's Chambers  
City Hall, San Francisco,  
California

Thursday, September 19, 1968  
10:15 a.m.

Question: Senator Muskie, now that you are here, you know that your campaign is in financial trouble in California. And there have been reports that you haven't been greeted by huge crowds as you have traveled about and neither has Vice President Humphrey.

How do you think you are going to turn this around, or are you going to turn it around?

Answer: Oh, I don't know. Governor Agnew visited my state last week and he wasn't overwhelmed by people, and people seemed to think he somehow has gotten the lead in the polls, with his running mate.

I am sure you realize that it takes time for relatively unknown senator from Maine to acquire a national grass-roots constituency. I am patient, whether or not you are, and I am willing to work hard at the task of getting around the country.

And with the help of you gentlemen in press conferences like this, with the help of the television media, it is possible I think, for a man to become nationally known quite quickly.

I recall when Senator McCarthy announced less than a year ago that you people of the press were quite clear that he was barely visible in the polls and unknown nationally, and now he is a national figure and indeed a historic figure.

These things happen, depending upon whether you are able to strike a responsive public chord, whether or not you have something that people want to hear, whether or not you have qualities that people respond to, and it takes a little time to do this.

1 I am not going to conclude so hastily that because  
2 in less than two weeks I haven't suddenly become say, a second  
3 Christ, an instantly known figure, that there is no chance of  
4 winning in November. We are going to win in November, and we  
5 are going to win because we believe that we represent the right  
6 positions in the problems that trouble our people.

7 So far as the Vice President is concerned, I can  
8 speak for myself in this connection that he has the qualities  
9 of leadership which, I think, as between the two major candi-  
10 dates offers what the American people want.

11 Question: Senator Muskie, do you think you can  
12 become a household word by November 5?

13 Answer: As I said quite some time ago, I am a house-  
14 hold word in my own household. And that is good enough for me.

15 Mayor Alioto: You may recall, Nixon was a household  
16 word in 1962 when he was beat in California by 800 thousand  
17 votes.

18 Question: Would you concede that Nixon is ahead at  
19 this time?

20 Answer: I concede the polls say he is.

21 Question: What about yourself personally?

22 Answer: I don't have any polling resources. I rely  
23 upon the same thing you gentlemen do. I don't have any special  
24 insights or special survey research or polling resources, and  
25 really, I don't worry about it as much as you do. I am con-  
cerned about winning an election on November 5. I have been  
behind before and much further behind than even the polls  
indicate this time.

That is my preoccupation. The election isn't going  
to be held today or tomorrow, it is going to be held on November  
5, and however much you fellows press the question about the  
polls, it isn't going to be held any earlier than November 5.

With respect to this question of Party finances in  
California, I am not aware we have any special problems there  
except the usual ones at the beginning of a campaign, of raising  
enough money to carry us through.

Question: What about the theory that George Wallace  
is the Democratic Party's best name in terms of siphoning votes

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1 off from the Republican ticket of Nixon and Agnew?

2 Answer: That is a theory that Mr. Nixon is trying  
3 to sell. I hope he is successful, but that isn't my view of  
4 the Wallace impact.

5 I think the Wallace impact cuts across party lines  
6 and I don't know whether the impact is greater on one Party  
7 or another, and whether that situation varies from State to  
8 State.

9 I repeat, I appreciate the confidence that you have  
10 in asking me questions like this, but I don't have polling  
11 resources. I don't have an organization out in the field as  
12 Gallup does or as Harris does, polling people. I am only  
13 speculating and I don't know what that proves.

14 I could speculate that I am ahead, but that doesn't  
15 prove anything. The important thing is that we are out to  
16 run a campaign and win an election. And we are going to do the  
17 best we can. And I am encouraged by the fact that we have more  
18 and more people who seem to recognize me. There are still those  
19 who say, "Well, who is he?" I remember when I was Governor of  
20 Maine and had been Governor three years, I was visiting a town,  
21 one in which I campaigned a great deal and was having lunch at  
22 a restaurant. People heard that I was there and they gathered  
23 outside to greet me when I came out, and I did. So they came  
24 forward for autographs and to shake hands, and I noticed this  
25 little boy was being pushed forward by his mother. And he was  
quite reluctant to come.

Finally, he said, "All right, Maw, I will go shake  
his hand, but who is he?" So I don't care how long you are in  
public life, there are going to be people who say, "Who is he."

Well, it is my job to reduce that number as much as  
I can with respect to myself and do it by proving to the  
American people that I offer something that has appeal for them.  
If I don't, I am not going to be able to prove it. But you  
can't expect me to do it in 10 days.

Question: In terms of your Republican counterpart,  
do you think Governor Agnew is going to hurt the Nixon ticket  
and, if so, how?

Answer: I think that is a problem for them to struggle  
with, not me.

Question: How much of an impact do you think the

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1 Chicago violence is going to have on the Democratic ticket?

2 Answer: Again, that is a hard one to answer. I will  
3 say this, that in the states in which I had campaigned, public  
4 sentiment ranging from what I would describe as substantial to  
5 overwhelming, has been on the side of Mayor Daley, which was  
6 rather surprising to me in view of the fact that the television  
7 coverage emphasized the other side.

8 Now, this may be, I suppose, due to the same kinds of  
9 forces that are responsible for the Wallace phenomenon, and I  
10 suspect it is.

11 It is probably also due to the forces that prompt  
12 candidates to talk so much about law and order and to try to  
13 blame it upon one Party or another.

14 So that is part of the public mood, and I think it  
15 is accurate to say that this issue, this overall problem, is  
16 a number one problem.

17 Now, just how the public reaction will settle down,  
18 when they have heard from all parties, and all candidates,  
19 is a little unpredictable at this point.

20 Question: Senator, you will be seeing Speaker Unruh  
21 in a few hours. Do you have any hopes of enlisting him in  
22 your California campaign?

23 Answer: Immediately after my acceptance speech, he  
24 came up to the platform and said, "I will do anything I can  
25 for you, you just let me know."

Question: What are you going to ask him to do?

Answer: He is a better judge of what he can do than  
I am.

Question: Senator, you said yesterday the country  
wants a change. What can the ticket headed by a man who has  
been around for quite a while do to convince the country of  
the fact that he represents a change from what we have already?

Answer: You might ask that question of Nixon, too.  
He was Vice President for eight years in an administration that  
had three recessions. And, as I recall, his 1960 campaign, he  
said, "I run four square on the record of eight years of Repub-  
lican Administrations."



1 No one asked him to what extent he disagreed with  
2 his President. Nobody thought it was relevant to ask that  
3 question of him. Nobody had asked him in this campaign whether  
4 or not he intends to pursue the policies that produced three  
5 recessions.

6 He has said quite clearly that if a man has been part  
7 of one Administration, he inevitably will offer exactly the  
8 same kind of policies and leadership that was offered by the  
9 Administration of which he is a part.

10 Using that line of reasoning, with Mr. Nixon's record  
11 from 1952 to 1960, I think he ought to be challenged on this  
12 point.

13 It is a ridiculous argument to make. No two presidents  
14 are carbon copies of each other. They never have been. Every  
15 man is a human being, with his own instincts, his own philosophy,  
16 his own background, his own experience, and he is going to have  
17 to apply all of those things to different circumstances than  
18 did his predecessor.

19 I don't care who he is -- whether you have two presi-  
20 dents of the same party following each other, or two presidents  
21 of different parties following each other. And to suggest you  
22 are going to have a repetition of our national experience in  
23 the next four years so that we can run the thing all over again  
24 with a different man, and that if you could repeat the national  
25 experience you would have two men who are carbon copies of each  
other, is a ridiculous kind of proposition to advance to an  
intelligent electorate.

Question: What do you think of President Johnson's  
endorsement the other day of your ticket? Do you think this is  
going to help you or hurt you?

Answer: Well, I would think it would help us with  
some, and hurt us with others.

Question: Senator, how much on either side?

Answer: The same question -- I have no polling  
organization, I have no surveying organization, I have no way  
of identifying the limits of these various groups.

Question: Mr. Nixon said yesterday that he was going  
to keep on eating California grapes and drinking California  
grape juice. Is that your feeling, too?

1 Answer: I don't know. I like California grapes. I  
2 have eaten them.

3 Why, did he have some special reason for saying that?

4 Question: He is not supporting the California boycott  
5 The boycott in the State. Some labor dispute.

6 Answer: I have no position on it as yet. I haven't  
7 had a chance to study this, which has developed as a California  
8 issue.

9 Question: What difference do you think it will make  
10 whether your ticket wins or the other ticket wins?

11 Answer: Well, we are spending a lot of time saying  
12 that, we have answered a lot of questions from members of the  
13 press, trying to suggest differences.

14 You want me to make a speech now. The last time I  
15 did that in a press conference, I later was told by my press  
16 secretary that I ought to have beefer and more precise answers.  
17 But I would be glad to make a speech, if you want me to.

18 Question: A little one, maybe.

19 Answer: You can't do it in a little speech. I think  
20 our thrust toward peace is greater and supported by the record  
21 with a greater degree than is that of the Nixon-Agnew ticket.

22 Now, to document that would require a speech. I think  
23 that our thrust toward a growing economy, in the direction of a  
24 growing economy, that would make it possible for the individual  
25 American to live better and to improve his life, and make it  
possible for governmental and nongovernmental institutions to  
do the things we need to do to provide essential government  
services, is greater than that of the Nixon-Agnew ticket on the  
record, and I have been trying to document that in the course  
of this campaign. But to go into the details, and make a speech  
and with all of these television cameras I would be delighted to  
make it.

Question: Senator, to pin you down just a little bit  
on President Johnson's endorsement, is that something you would  
look forward to? Are you happy with it?

Answer: I need his support. He told me that a week  
and a half ago.



1 Question: His public endorsement.

2 Answer: He has got as much right to speak as anyone  
3 else. I am delighted that he has chosen to speak.

4 Question: Senator, Vice President Humphrey has  
5 indicated that he could bring American troops out of Vietnam  
6 late this year or early next year. How does he propose to do  
7 this? How will this be accomplished?

8 Answer: I discussed this statement that he made, and  
9 I think I understand what he said better after talking with him  
10 than I did from reading accounts of it.

11 What he said, as I understand it, Clifford has said  
12 and others have said it is our purpose right now to gradually  
13 enlarge the military role of the South Vietnamese Army, in the  
14 hope that as they take over we can begin to bring our men back.

15 I don't think the Vice President predicted that this  
16 would happen. I think he expressed the hope, which is the hope  
17 of this whole thrust. The Republican platform, I think, urges  
18 an enlargement of the role of the South Vietnamese Army. For  
19 what purposes? Presumably for the purpose of relieving our  
20 people.

21 So what is so strange about suggesting that if that  
22 policy works, the policy endorsed by both parties, that we can  
23 begin to bring our boys home? I see nothing so strange about  
24 that.

25 Question: This doesn't give very much hope for the  
Paris Peace Talks, though, does it?

Answer: I don't know that our policy has to be an  
either/or policy; that either we equip the South Vietnamese  
Army to do its job better or we go to the Paris Peace Talks.  
Can't we do both things at once? Are they inconsistent? We  
have got to press for the Paris Peace Talks. But there is  
very little indication from the other side in Paris that they  
are committed to the objective of a negotiated settlement.

This is a strange thing. Nobody raises this question.  
They have never made a commitment to negotiate a settlement  
as a way of ending the war. Moreover, as we are pressed to  
define the role of the NLF in peace talks, they have never yet  
said as much as we said about the NLF, that they would accept  
a role for sidelines in peace talks. You are not going to get  
a negotiated settlement until both sides accept that as a

1 legitimate objective in their own national interest. They are  
2 not going to go to a negotiated settlement because we want one,  
unless they think it would serve them as well.

3 So we need, I think, some indication from them that  
4 they are committed to the idea of a negotiated settlement.  
5 Until we get to the point of actually discussing in a substan-  
6 tive way, political settlement of the war, at the same time we  
have to have some concern about our military posture in South  
Vietnam .

7 Question: How do you interpret Nixon and Agnew's  
8 comments so far on this so-called issue of law and order?  
Do you see it that they are using it as a codeword?

9 Answer: Well, I think they are greatly distorting it.  
10 I notice in the headlines in today's New York Times, that  
Governor Agnew accused Democrats of being lax on crime. I  
11 think that statement is the height of irresponsibility.

12 For example, Maine has the fifth lowest crime rate  
13 of all 50 States, with a Democratic governor, and Maryland  
with a Republican governor has the highest rate in violent  
crime of any of the states.

14 Now, what does that prove about Governor Agnew -- and  
15 he happens to be, I think, Governor of Maryland. Does that  
16 prove that the Governor of Maryland has a greater sense of  
responsibility about controlling crime than the Governor of  
Maine?

17 In the period from 1960 to 1968, when the national  
18 crime rate went up 88 percent, there were five states that  
had Republican Administrations in all of that period. And the  
crime rate in those states increased 170 percent.

19 Question: Do you believe it is a racial codeword?

20 Answer: Let me finish.

21 In the same period, there were 18 Democratic states  
22 and the crime rate rose in those states by 66 percent.

23 Yes, they are using it as a codeword, to suggest that  
24 Democrats are soft on crime, that perhaps Democrats even  
invented crime. This is what Agnew and Nixon are trying to  
prove.

25 And if you use any statistics at all, you can prove  
the contrary, but I think it is a ridiculous proposition and

1 the kind of thing that they try to do in a lot of issues.

2 Question: But they are not using it as a codeword  
3 in racism?

4 Answer: That is for them to answer.

5 Question: When are you going to campaign in the  
6 South?

7 Answer: I have been there already.

8 Question: How long?

9 Answer: I am going there again this week.

10 Question: How long?

11 Answer: There have been two weeks. I was there last  
12 week and this week. I don't think I have discriminated against  
13 them.

14 Question: Mayor Alioto, how do you think this visit  
15 of the Vice Presidential Candidate has effected the Democratic  
16 campaign in this area?

17 Answer by Mayor Alioto: I want to say, without embar-  
18 rassing the distinguished Senator from Maine, that his presence  
19 in San Francisco has greatly aided the campaign for the ticket.  
20 He is a man of unusual talents, unusual experience, unusual  
21 capacity, a man who has a great past in terms of not only his  
22 experience but his reading of the basic problems of our times.  
23 And I would invite, very, very gladly invite, anybody to make  
24 a comparison between vice presidential candidates on the Demo-  
25 cratic side and the vice presidential candidate on the Republi-  
can side.

26 I invite that comparison just in terms of the kind of  
27 men they are, the kind of experience they have had, the kind of  
28 capacity they have. Of that kind of a comparison, we can only  
29 come out very, very well. On that basis, I am pleased to say  
30 that the distinguished senator from Maine has had a wide expo-  
31 sure to the people of the Bay Area in television programs, and  
32 public appearances and he has greatly aided the cause of the  
33 Democrats. They are going to close this gap that you are talking  
34 about just as surely by October 15 as they did in 1948, as they  
35 also did, you recall, in 1960.

36 Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen for being  
37 here.

1 Senator Muskie: I apologize. I do have a polling  
2 resource in San Francisco Bay.

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