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January 6, 1972

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NEWS CONFERENCE OF SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE  
NEW SENATE OFFICE BUILDING AUDITORIUM  
Washington, D.C., January 5, 1972

May I first of all say good morning and thank you for being here. I have a brief statement to read and then I'll be open to questions. First, I would like to say that I asked Edmund Muskie this morning if he would like to be President and his answer was no. He's the one over here. (Sen. Muskie indicated his son, Edmund Muskie Jr.) He didn't give me his reasons. It may be that he is a little overawed by all of this.

But I would like to say this at the outset to supplement briefly what I had to say last night. I intend to campaign on the basic issues that face America in 1972. The ending of the war, the return of prosperity, the restoration of leadership and respect for our country among the nations of the world and the rebuilding of trust and confidence of the people of the United States in the government in Washington.

Mine will be a national campaign. I will seek this nomination in the presidential primaries and the convention states. I shall enter each of the first eight primaries: New Hampshire, Florida, Illinois, Wisconsin, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Ohio--and as many of the others as my time and resources allow. In both primary and nonprimary states, my campaign representatives will insist upon compliance with the guidelines of the Democratic party in the nominating process as well as at the convention. By the rules it has adopted, the Democratic party of 1972 has gone further than any party in our history in placing the selection of the nominee for president in the hands of the people. I would encourage every Democrat to publicly make known his presidential preference and to vote in the primaries. Then ours will be an open convention. The politics of the 70's must be open politics, equally accessible to everyone. I'm committed to this course. This is the way in which my campaign will be conducted. With that I am ready for your questions. Maybe ready is the wrong word but I am here.

Q. (unclear):

Senator McCarthy said he intended to hold you accountable for your support of President Johnson's war policy in 1968. He went on to indicate very strongly that he might be tempted to add a fourth party outside the Democratic party. Would you respond to those two points.

ESM: With respect to the first, I would expect that any presidential candidate would be held accountable for all of his public acts, not simply with respect to 1968, but with respect to his entire public career which for me is a quarter of a century. If that accountability requires that I prove complete consistency in my views on all issues over a quarter of a century, I can end all speculation by saying here and now that you won't find that consistency. I try to address myself to the issues I've had to confront as a state legislator, as a governor, as a senator, as a candidate for vice-president, in the light of the

facts as I saw them, in the light of convictions which I developed over a lifetime, in the light of my best judgement. I've made mistakes. I've had reason to change my mind and I expect to be held accountable not only for the things I think I did right, but for the mistakes that I also acknowledge and I don't know of a candidate for president in my lifetime who's gone into a campaign without ever having made any mistakes from anyone's point of view. Wait, there was a second part to that question.

Q. (unclear) The second point was that the Senator indicated without saying so that under certain conditions he very well might ---a fourth party and bolt the Democrats.

ESM: I would regret such an action on the part of Senator McCarthy. That of course is his prerogative. I would hope he would not exercise it. I think it is important to defeat the administration now in office in Washington, the Nixon administration, and I think the best instrument for that result is the Democratic party. I will work within the party to make it as responsive as possible to the needs of those who now give allegiance to the party, to the needs of other Americans looking for national leadership, so that when our convention is behind us we can present to the country a candidate and a program that addresses itself to the problems of our land.

Q: (unclear)

ESM: I think our involvement in Vietnam was wrong. I've said that repeatedly over the last year and a half. I did not always believe that to be the case. I believe it now.

Q. (unclear)

ESM: Yes, indeed. I would hope that the President would have withdrawn completely before then. But if he has not, yes, indeed, I would set a date. I would say to the other side that I am prepared to set a date for complete withdrawal. The only conditions would be two: the safe withdrawal of our troops and the return of our prisoners of war.

Q. What date do you have in mind?

ESM: Well, there have been so many dates set which have now...which are now behind us. My objective would be as close to an immediate withdrawal from Vietnam as possible after I took office.

Q. You don't have a date in mind, then.

ESM: Well, as I've just said, I think the preferred initiative, and I've felt that right along, in order to insure the return of our prisoners, is to say to the other side that we'll negotiate a date for complete withdrawal, that date should be as soon as possible in the future, and the only conditions are the two I've mentioned.

Q. Senator, will you support the candidate of the Democratic party regardless of who it is?

ESM: Well, you could put some horrible examples. (applause) I mean, I would not support President Nixon if he were the nominee of the Democratic party. But with respect to the major candidates now in contention I will support the nominee of the Democratic party.

Q. Senator, what's the financial situation of your campaign?

ESM: Well, I hope it's in the black.

Q. (unclear) how much you expect it to go to.

**ESM:** Well, I hadn't checked with my bookkeeper before I came here this morning. The cost will . . . up to now, I think, ranges above a million dollars -- a million, two, don't hold me too closely to that figure. That's the order of magnitude. I think we've ended up the year in the black. I'm sure we don't have the resources yet to make the primary run I've already indicated. We hope to get them.

**Q.** Senator, both George McGovern (although he did not file) and Eugene McCarthy say that they reject the idea of a loyalty oath in the Illinois primary. You signed one. Why and what's your view of their decision?

**ESM:** Well, I've rejected loyalty oaths of this disclaimer type and voted against them in the Senate and will continue to do so. The question I faced in Illinois was whether, in order to give the voters of Illinois a chance to exercise their preference with respect to a presidential candidate, I would do what the law of Illinois requires. The courts have held, with respect to public employees, that such oaths are unconstitutional, so I don't regard it as a serious question, and I had no personal objection to expressing my loyalty to the country in order to get on the Illinois ballot. I applaud any effort, if Sen. McCarthy should mount one, to challenge the constitutionality of the Illinois loyalty oath, so called, and, in any case, I would hope that Sen. McCarthy would end up on the Illinois ballot.

**Q.** Sen., will you have delegates in all districts in Illinois or will you have a "hands off" policy in certain Chicago districts?

**ESM:** That's a developing situation.

**Q.** What was the reason for your last minute entry? Were you afraid you might be the only candidate to file in Illinois?

**ESM:** No, it just seemed to me that since my formal announcement didn't come until Jan. 4, that I ought not to enter earlier than Jan. 3.

**Q.** Do you think that you may enter the Indiana primary?

**ESM:** There's a chance that I may enter all of the primaries. We've made specific decisions only with respect to the first eight.

**Q.** Senator, (unclear) re: the primaries.

**ESM:** Well, as I said in my opening statement, I've made decisions with respect to the first eight. I've not excluded any of the first eight. I've said in addition that beyond that I would enter those which time and resources made possible. Those are very limiting factors.

**Q.** To go back to the prisoners -- the administration says that the Communists are demanding a lot more than just the withdrawal of American troops. (unclear)--

**Q.** Well, it's clear that the other side has publicly listed requirements for agreement that we would not necessarily find acceptable. But what we're down to now is what are the minimum to . . . to, from our point of view, to end our involvement in South Vietnam. Now with respect to what has been discussed in Paris, I can only say that the President himself doesn't seem to know everyday what is happening in Paris. He said one thing with respect to initiatives in Paris on the prisoner question and then issued a clarifying statement the next day which only succeeded in muddying the waters. So if he doesn't know you know, it's a little difficult for me to know what is happening in Paris with respect to proposals and counter-proposals. So far as I

know, we have not taken the kind of an issue that we discussed earlier in this conference -- an initiative to negotiate a date for complete withdrawal, tied to the safe withdrawal of our remaining forces and the return of our prisoners. So far as we know from anything the administration said publicly, that kind of an initiative has not been taken. I think it should be taken. And I have a personal belief that if it were taken, it would...it could lead toward the end of our involvement very quickly.

**Q.** Senator Muskie, the man who selected you as his running-mate in 1968 and who was largely responsible for your first national exposure, is going to announce his own candidacy in Philadelphia on Monday. What is your position toward Senator Humphrey and do you consider him your leading opponent?

**ESM:** With respect to the first question, I regard Hubert Humphrey as a good friend, have never had any reason to doubt it, and I hope he regards me as one. With respect to who may be my leading competition, I regard that as being President Nixon.

**Q.** Do you expect Governor Shapp to endorse you in the near future and how do you think you're going to do in Pennsylvania?

**ESM:** Well, with respect to expectations, I find it...over the last year I've found it wise to keep the level of expectations low.

**Q.:** How about your---do you have any prospects in Pennsylvania?

**ESM:** Well, we haven't taken any polls in Pennsylvania to my knowledge--my staff may prove me wrong, because we're constantly taking polls. I gather that we...and I get this from political leaders in Pennsylvania, that we...our strength is good in Pennsylvania. But I don't have a comparison.

**Q.** Can you beat Humphrey there or do you just hope to make a good showing?

**ESM:** Well, I've entered this race with the purpose of beating everyone---including President Nixon.

**Q.** Senator, do you expect Sen. Kennedy to be a rival to or(unclear)

**ESM:** He has said not. So far as I know his public statements are that he doesn't intend to be a candidate., will not be a candidate in the primaries. I've known the Kennedys a long time. I've found them to be men of their word.

**Q.:** Senator Muskie, what do you think of summitry as a form of international diplomacy and would you use it as politically as some of the presidents?

**ESM:** Well, I suppose, looking to President Nixon's example, that one tends to hold one view of summit meetings before one becomes president and another view after one becomes president. I would hope I would not slip into that temptation because it seems to me that there's always the danger that summit meetings may raise expectations to too high a level, and that as a consequence the reaction to them may be disappointment and a let-down and even a deterioration of the prospects for improving relationships. Nevertheless, I have said publicly that I applaud generally the President's initiatives with respect to his

visit to Peking. I'm not sure that that's the best way to take an initiative toward mainland China, but he took it, he chose that way and I'm willing to see him pursue it. It's interesting to note that his expectations have declined considerably since he first announced that visit. When he first announced it he cited it as a step that would bring peace in our time. And now his expectations are at a much lower level, which is what usually happens to summit meetings. Now with respect to the other summit meetings that he has scheduled, I think that President Nixon, because of the way --and I think the unwise way -- in which he handled first his visit to Peking, secondly his visit to Moscow, and thirdly his new international economic policy, had some fences to mend. Because he had the fences to mend, he had to hold these meetings with our principal allies in order to assure them as to our real intentions. If the advance preparation had been more adequate, more solicitous of the feelings and the sensitivities of our allies, those summits might not have been necessary.

Q: Senator Muskie, will President Nixon be more or less vulnerable with Vice President Agnew on the ticket?

ESM: I think that's a decision I really ought to leave to him. I have my own problems.

Q.: Senator, one theory is that your strategy is to have a first round knock-out by going out hoping for a first round knock-out and getting the nomination early. Do you think it's possible for any candidate to win the nomination before the convention? Do you think it's possible for anyone, including yourself, to lock it up?

ESM: I think it would be on the order of a political miracle for any one candidate to do that. One ought to distinguish between hopes and expectations. Now to expect, you know, to win the first eight primaries, for example, is a pretty high order of expectation. I don't think it's possible for any one candidate to do that. We'd like to win all we can and if we can win all eight that would be fine. But you don't gear your strategy and your plans to your hopes. You try to establish realistic expectations and move along. I don't think it's essential to my getting the nomination that I win the first eight. I hope we can win as many as...more...as many as we can and that we go on from there.

Q: Senator, you said what you would do to end American involvement in Vietnam. What would you do to end the war itself after American troops are out? Specifically, would you cut off aid--military aid--to the Saigon regime or continue it?

ESM: Some transitional aid might be necessary, but I don't think that continuing American military assistance or supply should be the means for a continuation of the war. Now since what our objective is is the withdrawal of American forces, and the American involvement, obviously we can't impose a peace in South Vietnam. To try to impose one would mean our continued involvement. I think we should withdraw, but in the process of withdrawal if we are able to negotiate the conditions that I've already laid down, we may be able to lay down the basis for a political accommodation between the two Vietnams. But that should not be a condition of our withdrawal. And secondly, we ought not to use military aid as a way of continuing the war after we get out.

Q.: (unclear)

ESM: Wait, let me pick one at a time.

-more-

Q. On the subject of military aid, in the middle East, what is your opinion on the reported sale of Phantom war planes to Israel?(unclear)

ESM: It's a little late, I think. I think that the question of delivering Phantom jets should never have been tied to the question of negotiating a settlement of the war. Because the effect of that kind of tie was to put pressure on Israel, to lift pressure from Egypt, and to minimize the possibility of the parties arriving at an agreement. So I think it was wrong to do that. The first part of 1971 we were delivering Phantom jets at the rate, I understand, of about two a month under an open-ended agreement. If that had been continued the question of delivery of jets would never have been involved in the diplomatic negotiations that we also became involved in. So I think it was a mistake ever to tie the two together. I think we ought to resume delivery on that same kind of basis, if we can.

Q.: Senator, after your announcement last night, Republican national chairman Robert Dole said you are bad-mouthing the country. What's your reaction?

ESM: Well, my reaction to that is that Senator Dole must mean that he doesn't see any problems confronting our country. The problems I ticked off are very familiar to anyone who's been involved in the legislative process here, because we've been involved with them all of my twelve years--the problems of the cities, the problem of the environment, the problem of racial tensions, and so on through the list that I included in my speech last night. Now if he feels that that was an inaccurate statement, that those problems do not exist, then maybe he can justify his accusation. But if he concedes the existence of these problems if all he is saying is that we ought not to mention them out loud, then I say that he's absorbed the Nixon policy of secrecy in government too much, that he ought to abandon it before he himself has to face his election in '72.

Q.: Senator, what do you think of the leaking of classified documents to Jack Anderson, the disclosures made about the India-Pakistan war?

ESM: Well, I don't like this way of getting information to the public. For the public to have to get its information through stolen documents I think is a sad commentary on the state of government in our country today, and on its credibility and on its confidence in the people themselves. Now with respect to the disclosures of the Anderson papers, it's clear that the President meant what he said when he said some time ago, "Don't pay attention to what I say but rather to what I do." Because what he was saying is clearly revealed in the Anderson papers and runs directly contrary to what his administration was saying publicly with respect to our stance in the India-Pakistan situation. Now if he had said to us, told us that what our government was doing--it wouldn't have been necessary to get this information by the means that were used.

Q.: Senator, how important is the economic issue going to be in the upcoming campaign and (unclear)

ESM: Well, it's difficult to predict what specific issues will still be alive ten or eleven months from now. The issues now are very clear. They include, very clearly, the war, they include the economy, they include the question of domestic peace, as I

said last night. All of our polls and all of the states in which we take them indicate that these three are at the top of public concerns at the present time. And so they are issues now, and unless they're dealt with effectively they will be issues next November.

Q: (unclear)

ESM: I'm asked whether I favor an even-handed policy in the Middle East. I think our responsibility at the present time is to do what we can to create a climate favorable to a settlement of the issues in the Middle East between the two parties involved--they're really more on each border but with respect to Egypt and Israel. And our responsibility there is to supply not both parties with arms, but Israel with the Phantom Jets. I don't know how you describe that as an even-handed policy. In the sense that we would like to see peace and stability in the Middle East, then what we're seeking, you know, is a result that would be an advantage to all countries of the area. But with respect to our specific strategic and tactical decisions now, they must be directed at the points to which I've already addressed myself this morning. And I don't think the word even-handed is useful in describing it.

Q: Senator, a lot of people think the credibility or believeability of President Nixon---(unclear)

ESM: Well, I don't think a candidate can advance his own credibility, that's for other people to judge. But I think we can...I challenge the policies and the attitudes and the approaches of the administration which have undermined the credibility of government in Washington. And I find, wherever I go in this country, deep distrust of government at all levels because of the climate that has been generated here in Washington and at the state and local level with respect to the responsiveness of government in its policies to the needs and to the voices of the people themselves. And I think that the Nixon administration is subject to criticism and attack on this issue. (Additional question, re: LBJ and credibility) Those are relative things...it's difficult I think...relative judgments that it's difficult to make, and I might say that I'm running against Mr. Nixon.

Q: Senator Muskie, do you think that winning the New Hampshire primary is essential to your whole strategy for the nomination?

ESM: Winning it? Oh, I'd say so. I can't imagine surviving a defeat in New Hampshire. (Additional) Well, now you get into the question of numbers. I've always felt that the fellow who got the most votes won any election. I won one once by one vote and it was acclaimed as a victory. I've won them by thousands of votes and they've been acclaimed as victories. I've lost them by narrow margins and have never been hailed as the victor.

Q: Senator, your \_\_\_\_\_ propose reuniting the races in this country. How do you react to the position of President Nixon who founded the Southern Strategy?

ESM: I was told by my Press Secretary that I should make my answers as brief as possible. It's difficult to do that with respect to a question like that. But I'd say, briefly, that what one must do to engage the confidence of all groups of Americans, is to address ourselves credibly to the problems which concern particular groups of Americans.



Q: Senator, you built your reputation in the Senate as a man strong against pollution. To what extent will that be an issue in this campaign and how will you attack President Nixon on that front?

ESM: With respect to the extent to which this is an issue, it is a subject of broad concern to Americans. I think that as I recall our polls it... it runs somewhere on the order of 5, 6, 7, or 8 on the list of concerns, down around ten or fifteen percent, which is a high percentage compared to others, but it isn't at the very top. And so Americans are concerned about it. And yet I've found, with respect to this issue, that it isn't an issue that is necessarily much discussed in campaign speeches because one gets involved into...in dull technical kinds of considerations, complicated policies and legislation that it's difficult to get people aroused about, so people are concerned about it as a cause, and I think that a candidate should commit himself clearly to policies which will effectively deal with it, but I can't predict in advance to what extent there'll be extended debate between candidates. With respect to President Nixon, his record is mixed. He has taken, I think, some useful initiatives. He came aboard late in life but, you know, we're al...always willing to accept converts. But there is still uncertainty in my mind as to his real commitment. For instance, the water pollution bill, which passed the Senate 86-0. The one section of that bill, which the administration now attacks, was written in large part on the basis of consultations that the committee had with Mr. Ruckelshaus who is, I take it, still Mr. Nixon's preeminent authority and agent in this field. And now, the President attacks that provision. Well this can do nothing, as far as I'm concerned, but undermine his credibility in yet another area of public policy. Now whether or not that issue emerges, depends upon what happens to that bill in the House and then in conference this year.

Q: Unclear

ESM: Well, with respect to the bombings, first of all I think they're completely unjustified. The President has offered to his spokesmen various justifications, including, I think, the old one about protecting our troops as we withdraw them. I hadn't realized that our troops were in such jeopardy after a withdrawal just a few weeks ago and another withdrawal to which the President says he's still committed on Feb. 1. So if our troops are sufficiently safe to permit those withdrawals to go forward, then I see no justification for the massive bombing in the North last week. So I can't speculate... if that wasn't the real reason, I don't know what the real reason was.

Q: Unclear. Re: LBJ support.

ESM: Well, President Johnson...I...I...on occasion when I was in Texas I called him to say hello, but he made it quite clear--that hasn't been often--but he's made it quite clear that he doesn't intend to get involved in...in this political exercise this year. He's made it clear indirectly. I see no evidence of his involvement and so I'm sure he wouldn't offer me any advice.

Q: You said last night "I intend to ask everyone of you to pay your fair share of the cost." Does this mean higher taxes?

ESM: It means, first of all, tax reform. Secondly, it means that we must revive the economy because right now we're using tax policy to stimulate the economy and we can't very well run counter to that policy and impose higher taxes at this point. Now when we get tax reform when we get the economy rolling again, if at that time we need to make a greater tax effort to deal with these pressing problems, the

we must face that and be willing to take that step. Now with respect to tax reform, in spite of the effort to reform in the 1969 Tax Reform Act, we still get these persistent figures of over a hundred Americans in the millionaire class who pay no taxes. Now this kind of repeated experience undermines public confidence in the fairness of the tax system. And when you, with that, get the heavier and heavier burdens of the property tax, which bear most heavily upon those least able to pay, then you get tax resistance and I think those two factors are as much at the heart of resistance on the part of the people to increased taxes and to bond issues as anything else that I know of. And we've got to get at those problems.

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