

Bates College

SCARAB

Speeches

Edmund S. Muskie Papers

5-30-1970

Commencement Address by Senator Edmund S. Muskie at the Hyde School

Edmund S. Muskie

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"COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS"

**EXCERPTS FROM THE REMARKS OF
SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE (D. MAINE)
AT THE HYDE SCHOOL - BATH, MAINE
MAY 30, 1970 - 11:00 a.m.**

**AS A MEMBER OF THE HYDE SCHOOL COM-
MUNITY, I SHARE WITH ALL THOSE PRESENT HERE
THE JOY AND PRIDE OF THIS DAY. YOURS IS
THE FIRST FOUR-YEAR CLASS OF THE HYDE
SCHOOL.**

**I AM TOLD THAT SEVERAL MONTHS AGO
EACH OF YOU HAD BEEN ACCEPTED FOR COLLEGE
ENTRANCE AND THIS FACT IS IN ITSELF A TRI-
BUTE TO YOU, TO HYDE AND TO THE HOMES
AND SCHOOLS FROM WHICH YOU CAME TO HYDE.**

IT IS PROPER THAT HYDE SCHOOL IS IN
MAINE -- FOR THE SCHOOL AND THE STATE
ARE MUCH ALIKE.

AS HYDE OBSERVES A MILESTONE THIS
YEAR, SO DOES MAINE -- ITS ONE-HUNDRED-
FIFTIETH YEAR. THERE IS A VAST DIFFERENCE
IN AGE--MORE THAN A GENERATION'S GAP, TO BE
SURE. BUT THE HYDE SCHOOL AND MAINE ARE
BOTH PIONEERS, BOTH ARE PRACTICAL BUT
VENTURESOME AND INNOVATIVE, BOTH ARE
NATURE - ORIENTED BUT CONSCIOUS OF MEN
AND THEIR NEEDS, BOTH ARE STRONGLY INDEPENDENT
BUT HIGHLY TOLERANT.

AND BOTH MEASURE SUCCESS IN TERMS THAT
GO BEYOND NORMAL STANDARDS. ACADEMICS
IS NOT EVERYTHING HERE IN HYDE, JUST AS
A HIGH INCOME IS NOT THE SOLE MEASURE OF
QUALITY IN OUR STATE. AT HYDE, GRADES HAVE
MODIFYING FACTORS APPLIED, SUCH AS ATTITUDE
AND EFFORT VALUES. THE INDIVIDUAL
IS EVALUATED ON OCCASION WITH REFERENCE
TO HIS GENERAL QUALITY OF CITIZENSHIP IN
THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

THIS KIND OF EXPERIENCE AT YOUR TIME OF
LIFE IS THE BEST PREPARATION FOR THE YEARS
AHEAD. WHILE GOOD ACADEMIC GRADES ARE

THE MARK OF A SCHOLAR, THE GRADING SYSTEM
YOU HAVE HELPED BUILD AND OPERATE HERE
SEEMS TO PRODUCE A MORE COMPLETE PERSON,
A WHOLE PERSON.

YOU WILL NEED THIS EXPERIENCE TO DEAL
WITH THE ISSUES CONFRONTING AMERICA TODAY.
THEY ARE AS COMPLEX AS ANY I CAN RECALL.
IT IS NAIVE TO SUGGEST THAT ALL AMERICANS
WILL OR SHOULD REACT TO THEM IN AN IDENTICAL
WAY.

WE ARE DIVIDED ON MANY FRONTS. BUT
WE DO SHARE CERTAIN OVER-RIDING OBJECTIVES:

PEACE AT HOME AND ABROAD, JOB OPPORTUNITIES,
ECONOMIC STABILITY, RACIAL HARMONY, A WHOLE-
SOME ENVIRONMENT AND A SENSE OF NATIONAL
DECENCY, PURPOSE AND PRIDE.

THE HYDE SCHOOL IS A PIONEER SCHOOL,
AND YOU ARE MEMBERS OF A PIONEER CLASS.
AND WE ALL BELONG IN MAINE, FOR THIS IS
A PIONEER STATE.

WE ARE PIONEERS BECAUSE WE STILL
LIVE IN A FREE STATE. WE HAVE NOT YET BECOME
CHAINED TO THE SLAVERY OF THE FUMES, THE
CROWDING, THE CLUTTER, THE NOISE AND THE
WASTEFUL AND MONOTONOUS SPRAWL OF

METROPOLITAN AMERICA. WE HAVE NOT YET
LOST OUR SPIRIT OF TOLERANCE AND TOGETHER-
NESS TO THE STRAIN OF DIVISION AND DISUNITY.

IN MAINE -- AND AT THE HYDE SCHOOL --
WE CAN STILL WALK ALONE ON THE BEACH OR
THROUGH THE WOODS AND FEEL THAT THIS
IS AS IT SHOULD BE. WE CAN STILL GREET
EACH OTHER ON THE STREETS OF OUR TOWNS
AND CITIES AND FEEL CONFIDENT IN OUR CLOSE-
NESS WITH EACH OTHER. WE ARE STILL TOGETHER --
AS A PEOPLE AND WITH OUR SURROUNDINGS.

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN MUCH OF OUR
NATION WAS THIS WAY --WHEN ALL AMERICANS
WERE PIONEERS. ALL AMERICA WAS A NEW
FRONTIER OF PROMISE AND HOPE FOR ANYONE
WHO WANTED TO SETTLE DOWN AND TILL THE
LAND.

BUT FEW AMERICANS LISTENED CAREFULLY
TO MEN LIKE THOMAS JEFFERSON. JEFFERSON
LOOKED AHEAD TO AMERICA'S FUTURE AND SAW
THAT AMERICA WOULD FACE DIFFICULT TIMES
WHEN WE FOUND MOST OF OUR PEOPLE LIVING
IN CITIES -- WHERE COMMUNICATIONS AMONG

DIFFERENT KINDS OF PEOPLE WERE BREAKING
DOWN AND WHERE THE PROMISES OF AMERICA
HAD FADED FOR TOO MANY OF OUR FELLOW
CITIZENS.

(A)

THESE PRESSURES TO PAY THE
COSTS OF URBAN LIFE WILL SOON BE
BROUGHT TO BEAR ON OUR STATE AND ON
OUR SCHOOL. THOSE PRESSURES WILL
NOT COME FROM MEN OF EVIL INTENT WHO
ARE DETERMINED TO LAY WASTE TO THOSE
THINGS THAT WE VALUE. THEY WILL COME
FROM THE NORMAL LONGING OF PEOPLE
TO MOVE TO A STATE WHERE LIFE IS STILL
WORTH LIVING.

(B)

SO MAINE AND THE HYDE SCHOOL
ARE BOTH IN A UNIQUE POSITION AS WE
BEGIN THE NEW DECADE. WE ALL HAVE A
VALUABLE OPPORTUNITY -- AS PIONEERS --
TO LOOK AROUND US, TO SEE THE MISTAKES
WE HAVE MADE IN THE REST OF THE NATION,
TO SEE THAT WE DO NOT REPEAT THEM HERE,
AND TO HELP ALL AMERICA REGAIN THE HOPE
AND THE SPIRIT OF THE PAST.

WHEN WE BUILT AMERICA WE DID
NOT PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO OUR NATURAL

(C)

ENVIRONMENT -- TO WHAT WE DESTROYED
AS WE BUILT. WE NEGLECTED THE VALUES
OF OPEN SPACE, CLEAN AIR AND CLEAN
WATER. AND THE CITIES HAVE PAID THE
PRICE OF THAT NEGLECT.

FEW AMERICANS NOW CAN ENJOY
THE EXPERIENCE STILL AVAILABLE TO YOUNG
PEOPLE WHO GROW UP IN MAINE OR WHO
COME TO THE HYDE SCHOOL: THE SEA, THE
FORESTS AND THE OPEN AND FREE SPIRIT OF
A RELATIVELY CLEAN STATE.

(D)

WE STILL HAVE THOSE EXPERIENCES
IN MAINE. WE ARE STILL PIONEERS WITH
THE DESTINY OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES.

WHEN WE BUILT AMERICA WE PAID
LITTLE ATTENTION TO THE HUMAN COSTS
OF GROWTH AND PROFIT -- HERE, TOO, WE
DESTROYED AS WE BUILT. AMERICANS WHO
COULD NOT OR DID NOT KEEP UP WERE
LEFT BEHIND. AND NOW WE PAY THE PRICE
OF THAT NEGLECT. WE PAY THAT PRICE IN
CROWDED SCHOOLS, OVERBURDENED HOSPITALS,
UNEMPLOYMENT, INTOLERANCE, HATE AND
DIVISION.

(E)

YET IN MAINE WE HAVE NOT
REACHED THAT POINT. WE ARE STILL
TOGETHER AS A PEOPLE, AND WE ARE
WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE MAINE A
BETTER PLACE FOR ALL OUR PEOPLE. WE
MAY NOT BE A WEALTHY STATE, BUT WE
OWN QUALITIES OF LIFE THAT CANNOT BE
PURCHASED. WE NEED MORE JOBS FOR OUR
PEOPLE AND BETTER SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS,
BUT WE KNOW WE CAN GAIN WHAT WE NEED
WITHOUT RUINING WHAT WE HAVE.

(F)

SO WE ARE ALSO PIONEERS WITH
THE DESTINY OF OUR PEOPLE.

AS PIONEERS WITH A SENSE OF
HISTORY AND A KNOWLEDGE OF THE MIS-
TAKES WE MUST AVOID, WE OUGHT TO FOCUS
ON THE QUALITIES OF LIFE WE SHOULD
PRESERVE.

WE SHOULD PRESERVE AN OPEN AND
FREE SOCIETY. THIS MEANS A SOCIETY
WITHOUT BARRIERS TO THE FULFILLMENT OF
ANY CITIZEN'S POTENTIAL. IT MEANS A
SOCIETY OF TOLERANCE AND JUSTICE AND MERCY.

(G)

WE SHOULD PRESERVE THE
WILLINGNESS TO CHANGE WHEN CHANGE
IS NECESSARY. THIS MEANS THE WILLING-
NESS TO LISTEN TO THE ARGUMENTS FOR
NEW VALUES AND NEW ATTITUDES. IT
MEANS THE WILLINGNESS OF PIONEERS TO
ADAPT TO NEW CIRCUMSTANCE AND NEW
CHALLENGE.

AND WE SHOULD PRESERVE THE
SANCTITY OF LIFE ITSELF. THIS MEANS A
RESPECT FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT AS WELL AS
FOR OURSELVES. IT MEANS THE HIGHEST

(H)

REGARD FOR WHAT ALL OF US HAVE IN
COMMON WITH EACH OTHER -- THE
DEPENDENCE ON EACH OTHER AND ON THE
EARTH THAT SUSTAINS OUR LIVES.

THESE ARE THE QUALITIES OF THE
PIONEER SPIRIT. THEY SOUND LIKE
FUNDAMENTAL VALUES, AND THEY ARE.
BUT THEY ARE ALSO THREATENED BY OUR
TENDENCY TO FORGET THEM WHEN WE ARE
ATTRACTED BY THE PURSUIT OF MATERIAL
WEALTH, BY THE PROSPECTS OF COMFORT

(1)

AND AFFLUENCE, AND BY THE EASY ANSWERS
TO DIFFICULT PROBLEMS.

THE PIONEER SPIRIT CAN BE WRITTEN
INTO LAWS AND ORDINANCES. BUT
ESSENTIALLY WE DEPEND ON OUR OWN
COMMITMENT TO THAT SPIRIT TO KEEP IT
ALIVE.

THIS IS THE CHALLENGE THAT
MAINE FACES AND THAT THE HYDE SCHOOL
FACES. IT IS THE CHALLENGE OF YOUR
GENERATION MORE THAN IT IS OF MINE.

(J)

IF YOU CAN KEEP THE SPARK OF
THAT SPIRIT VITAL AND ALIVE IN MAINE --
WHERE IT CAN STILL BE NURTURED BY
THE ENVIRONMENT ITSELF -- YOU CAN TAKE
IT TO THE REST OF THE NATION.

IN OUR CITIES AND IN CROWDED
STATES, WE DO FACE NEW CHALLENGES --
THE CHALLENGES OF MAKING SENSE OF OUR
SOCIETY, OF MAKING VALUE OF OUR
DIVERSITY, AND OF RECLAIMING WHAT WE
HAVE NOT LOST.

(K)

THE PIONEER SPIRIT THAT WE
CAN KEEP ALIVE IN MAINE AND AT THIS
SCHOOL CAN BE THE KEY TO A NEW LIFE
FOR ALL AMERICA.

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