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Speeches

Edmund S. Muskie Papers

6-19-1970

**Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie to the American Legion
Department of Maine at Lawrence High School**

Edmund S. Muskie

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EXCERPTS FROM THE REMARKS OF
SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE
AT LAWRENCE HIGH SCHOOL
AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF MAINE, FAIRFIELD, MAINE
JUNE 19, 1970 - 2:00 p.m.

LITTLE MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY AGO,
A GROUP OF CITIZEN-SOLDIERS MET IN PARIS.

THEY WERE WEARY OF WAR.

THEY WERE PASSIONATELY DEVOTED TO
THEIR COUNTRY ACROSS THE ATLANTIC.

AND THEY FORMED AN ORGANIZATION...
TO WHICH YOU NOW PROUDLY BELONG... BASED
ON THE VALUES THEY SHARED TOGETHER... OF
LIBERTY... OF COMRADESHIP... OF PEACE.

NOW, AS IN 1919, MANY AMERICANS, AT HOME AND ABROAD, ARE WEARY OF WAR.

NOW, AS THEN, MOST AMERICANS ARE PASSIONATELY DEVOTED TO THEIR COUNTRY.

AND NOW, IT IS AGAIN INCUMBENT ON US, ESPECIALLY THOSE OF US WHO HAVE WITNESSED AND FELT THE PAIN OF WAR, TO AFFIRM THOSE VALUES WE SHARE TOGETHER.

SOME EIGHTEEN YEARS AGO, ADLAI STEVENSON SPOKE TO THE LEGION IN NEW YORK CITY. I BELIEVE THAT WHAT HE STATED THEN IS MOST TIMELY TODAY.

"IT WAS", HE SAID, "ALWAYS ACCOUNTED A VITRUE IN A MAN TO LOVE HIS COUNTRY."

WITH US IT IS NOW SOMETHING MORE THAN
A VIRTUE. IT IS A NECESSITY, A CONDI-
TION OF SURVIVAL. WHEN AN AMERICAN
SAYS THAT HE LOVES HIS COUNTRY, HE
MEANS NOT ONLY THAT HE LOVES THE
NEW ENGLAND HILLS, THE PRAIRIES GLISTEN-
ING IN THE SUN, THE WIDE AND RISING
PLAINS, THE GREAT MOUNTAINS, AND THE
SEA. HE MEANS THAT HE LOVES AN INNER
AIR, AN INNER LIGHT IN WHICH FREEDOM
LIVES AND IN WHICH A MAN CAN DRAW A
BREATH OF SELF-RESPECT. MEN WHO HAVE
OFFERED THEIR LIVES FOR THEIR COUNTRY
KNOW THAT PATRIOTISM IS NOT THE FEAR

OF SOMETHING; IT IS THE LOVE OF
'SOMETHING.'

THERE SHOULD BE NO DOUBT, THEN, THAT
MEMBERS OF THIS LEGION DO LOVE THIS
LAND... THE DREAM OF AMERICA AS WELL AS
THE OPPORTUNITY OF AMERICA.

YOU HAVE LEFT THESE SHORES WHEN CALLED
TO DO SO.

YOU HAVE GONE TO BATTLE, IN THE HONEST
BELIEF THAT YOU WOULD HELP DEFEND LIBERTY
AND PROMOTE JUSTICE.

AND YOU HAVE RETURNED, WHEN THE GUNS
WERE SILENCED, TO WORK THE LAND...TO

ENGAGE IN COMMERCE...TO PRACTICE A PROFESSION.A.AND TO ENJOY FREEDOM.

YOU DID NOT FIGHT FOR PERSONAL GAIN...
FOR MERE ADVENTURE...OR FOR IMPERIAL CON-
QUEST. BUT YOU FOUGHT TO BRING PEACE AS
QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, NOT ONLY FOR YOUR OWN
SECURITY, BUT FOR THAT OF YOUR CHILDREN.

AND NOW MANY OF YOU ARE PUZZLED, AND PER-
HAPS EVEN ANGERED, BY YOUR CHILDREN, OR
YOUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN...BY THE LENGTH
OF THEIR HAIR...THE CUT OF THEIR CLOTHES...
OR THE SOUND OF THEIR RHETORIC.

YET I SUGGEST THAT THESE SYMBOLS OF
YOUTH ARE NOT CAUSE FOR ALARM...FOR VIN-
DICTIVE WORDS...OR FOR VIOLENT ACTS.

BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT, IN SUBSTANCE, THE
VAST MAJORITY OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE WISH TO
IMPROVE AMERICA NOT TO REJECT HER. THEY
WISH AMERICA TO BE UNITED, NOT INSECURE.
THEY WISH TO BE PROUD OF AMERICA, NOT
DISHEARTENED ABOUT HER.

AND ALTHOUGH MANY OF THEM MAY
SINCERELY BELIEVE THAT THE WAR WE ARE PRE-
SENTLY ENGAGED IN IS NOT WORTHY OF AMERICA...
IS NOT WORTHY OF WHAT YOU HELPED TO PRE-
SERVE AND TO BUILD...THEY WOULD, I AM

CONVINCED, STRONGLY DEFEND AMERICA OF
AMERICA HERSELF WERE THREATENED BY FORCE
OF ARMS.

BEAR IN MIND THAT MANY OF YOUR CHILDREN,
AND MINE, WILL NOT REACH THE AGES OF MANY
OF US HERE, UNTIL AFTER THE YEAR 2000. THEY
ARE URGING US...BY TEACH-INS...BY PEACEFUL
PROTESTS...BY LOBBYING EFFORTS...TO SAY
YES, WE DO UNDERSTAND, WE DO CARE, AND WE
WILL TRY. WHETHER OUR CHILDREN AND GRAND-
CHILDREN LOOK BACK ON US ONE DAY WITH PRIDE,
OR WITH SHAME, WILL DEPEND ON WHETHER WE
HAVE THE DECENCY TO HEAR THEM OUT, AND THE
GOOD SENSE TO RESPOND IN AN INTELLIGENT

MANNER. AS DEMUND BURKE PUT IT, IT WILL
DEPEND ON OUR ABILITY "SO TO BE PATRIOTS AS
NOT TO FORGET WE ARE GENTLEMEN",

FOR THE BASIC DEVOTION TO AMERICA
WHICH OUR YOUNG PEOPLE POSSESS, IS THE
SAME WHETHER THEY ARE IN SCHOOL OR IN A
DISTANT JUNGLE...AND IT IS NOT MEANT TO
CONTRADICT OUR OWN ALLEGIANCE.

THEIR PATRIOTISM, LIKE YOURS, IS BASED
ON THOSE AMERICAN INSTINCTS OF COOPERATION,
FAIRNESS, TOLERANCE AND UNDERSTANDING WHICH
TRANSCEND DIFFERENCES IN AGE, IN OCCUPATION,
IN POLITICAL PERSUASION.

THEIR PATRIOTISM, LIKE YOURS, IS
DIRECTED TOWARD POSITIVE GOALS... OF FREEDOM...
AND SECURITY... AND MUTUAL RESPECT.

THEIR PATRIOTISM, LIKE YOURS, CAN DO
AMERICA GREAT HONOR.

THAT IS WHY I BELIEVE AMERICA IS NOT THE
PLACE, AND 1970 IS NOT THE TIME, FOR ANY OF
US TO ESCAPE BEHIND OUR OWN PERSONAL
BANNER, AND CALL IT THE ONLY TRUE PATRIOTISM.

INSTEAD, PATRIOTISM REQUIRES US ALL
TO HAVE THE COURAGE TO TALK SENSIBLY TO
EACH OTHER... TO REFRAIN FROM SENSELESS...
RAGE... TO TRY CROSSING THE BORDERS WHICH
SEEM TO DIVIDE US.

IT REQUIRES A SERIOUS UNDERSTANDING
OF THE FEELINGS OF OTHERS WHOSE VIEWS ON
A PARTICULAR ISSUE MAY BE DIFFERENT...WHO
RESPECT THE FLAG IN A QUIET MANNER...WHO
BELIEVE IN AMERICA, BUT NOT IN THE WAR.

I BELIEVE WE CAN PRACTICE THIS PATRIOTISM...
WE CAN APPROACH THE FUTURE TOGETHER...
WE CAN SHAPE A WHOLE SOCIETY.. BUT WE
MUST WANT TO TRY TO REACH OUT TO YOUNG
AMERICANS, TO TRUST THEIR SINCERITY, AND
THEIR PATRIOTISM. I KNOW THAT YOU CAN.

FOR, AS THE PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTI-
TUTION OF THIS AMERICAN LEGION CLEARLY

**SETS FORTH, YOU HAVE UNDERTAKEN A
SPLENDID COMMITMENT, "...TO MAKE RIGHT
THE MASTER OF MIGHT; TO PROMOTE PEACE
AND GOOD WILL ON EARTH; TO SAFEGUARD AND
TRANSMIT TO POSTERITY THE PRINCIPLES OF
JUSTICE, FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY; TO
CONSECRATE AND SANCTIFY OUR COMRADESHIP
BY OUR DEVOTION TO MUTUAL HELPPULNESS".**

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