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Edmund S. Muskie

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Press Release

MAINE FOR MUSKIE

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MUSKIE ASKS ACTION TO HELP MAINE'S SHOE INDUSTRY

Brunswick, Maine--Senator Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) tonight asked for action to help Maine's footwear industry and questioned whether the national administration has "really studied the facts of the shoe import problem."

"Does it care at all that during its first two years in office--

--Maine's shoe production will have fallen from 58.4 million pairs in 1968 to 45.4 million pairs in 1970--a decline of some 22 per cent;

--The value of these shoes will have decreased from \$314.2 million in 1968 to \$287.2 million in 1970--a decline of some 9 per cent;

--And jobs in Maine's shoe industry will have declined from 26,900/to 22,900 in 1970--a decline of some 15 per cent?"

In remarks prepared for a Democratic dinner tonight in Brunswick, Senator Muskie labeled as "premature" President Nixon's threat to veto "any quota legislation--except for textiles." He said Congress should first have the opportunity to consider fully the pending legislation.

Acknowledging that "the shoe industry itself is hurting," Mr. Muskie said that the heart of the problem lies "in the enormous increase of low-cost foreign imports." Since 1960, imports have increased from 3.5 per cent of the entire U.S. market to almost 30 per cent this year.

Senator Muskie said that "if that national economy as a whole shares the benefits of a trade surplus--then it must also share the costs of trying to achieve that surplus. I am convinced, for example, that the provisions of the Trade Expansion Act must be strengthened to assist those who are hurt by imports.

"Workers and their firms should be eligible for assistance if they can simply show that increased imports have been a cause of serious harm.

"Unemployment compensation should be extended beyond the present 52-week limit--for workers who can find no other jobs due to age or skill limitations.

"And programs must be designed to adequately assist entire communities which may be dependent on a single, hard-pressed industry."

But, the Senator added, "I think we can do even more. We do not have to sit idly by while low-cost imports flood our markets. After all, every nation uses trade to advance the interests of its own citizens--and, when necessary, it develops the mechanism to do what it can to prevent serious and immediate economic dislocations at home.

"That is why I introduced in the Senate--in 1961 and in every subsequent Congress--a measure known as the Orderly Marketing Act."

Under that act, the Secretary of Commerce would advise the President if imports were hurting a domestic industry, he said. In such cases, the President could "set import quotas to prevent a sudden rush of foreign goods from overwhelming a domestic industry. He could permit increases in these quotas as growth occurred in domestic production. And he could at the same time offer adjustment assistance to the firms and workers of any industry experiencing the unbearable pressures of foreign competition."