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Edmund S. Muskie Papers

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Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie to the Maine Vocational Education Association

Edmund S. Muskie

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10/1

I appreciate your invitation to be here this
morning.

On my way over from Waterville, I began to
reflect on my own education.

And I remembered my first real educational encounter.

In the town of Rumford, where I grew up, there
was an elderly man who was known throughout the town
as a man of some wisdom.

One day, I gathered together enough courage to ask
him how he happened to be so wise.

"Well, Edmund," he said, "it's because I've got
good judgment. And good judgment comes from experience.
And experience -- well, experience comes from poor
judgment."

And no book that I have read has taught me any
greater lesson.

The joys of life -- and the sorrows -- come from
experience --

-- experience of learning from other people;

-- of working with other people;

-- and of ~~making~~ making mistakes.

~~of being helpful to other people.~~

We enter life with ~~differe~~ different skills...
different talents...different abilities -- differences
we must not only tolerate, but also respect.

And we must -- each of us -- have the opportunity
to develop those different skills and talents and
abilities to their full potential -- if we are to be
a vigorous and open and whole society.

I have had that opportunity in Maine.

And I was proud -- in 1963 -- to represent Maine
in the Senate at a time when we undertook to open lives
of opportunity for millions of Americans in every State --
by passing
~~when we passed~~ the Vocational Education Act.

You may remember -- ten years ago --

-- how inadequately funded vocational education
programs were;

-- how obsolete the content of many of those programs
was;

-- how neglected the value of those programs could be.

It was then that men like John Kennedy recognized --
-- that manpower policy and education policy were
not mutually exclusive;
-- that jobs and careers and livelihoods could
not depend completely on the liberal arts curriculum;
-- that technical and vocational training was
indispensable to the country's future.

And so --

-- legislation was drafted;
-- money was appropriated;
-- and vocational education came to life in many
parts of the country.

In the first four years following enactment of
the Vocational Education Act --

-- some 680 area vocational schools were built
across the land;
-- enrollments in Federally-assisted vocational
educational programs rose to seven and a half million
persons;
-- and the range of training opportunities increased

significantly for occupations suited to a modern
and expanding economy.

That impetus -- of national leadership;

-- national legislation;

-- national commitment --

-- was certainly felt in Maine.

And Governor Curtis encouraged the legislature to
respond --

-- by establishing a series of nine regional
vocational high schools for students, day and night;

-- by initiating eleven new programs at the
vocational technical institutes...and increasing
enrollment more than 62 percent;

-- by building new facilities...authorizing student
scholarships...and supporting vital bond issues.

In a relatively short time, Maine has become a
leader in recognizing the potential and the promise of
vocational education.

And Maine must continue to be a leader -- not
because vocational education is fashionable...but because
it is of enduring importance.

We know --

-- that there are jobs available which not enough people are trained to perform;

-- that there are avenues to dignity and a decent life which do not require a ~~Master's degree~~ ^{Master's degree};

-- that there are ways to eliminate poverty and ignorance and prejudice which are meaningful, productive and fair.

After all, you teach agriculture...and business... and home economics...and industrial, trade and technical skills.

You understand the value of practical experience.

And your success is measured in the self-respect of your students...in the more vigorous economy of your communities...in the greater potential of our State.

But we cannot ^{now} be satisfied with the distance we have come, ~~in recent years~~ although we have made an important beginning,

For technological change will continue its momentum into the future.

And our
~~And our~~ ability to develop the human resources
sufficient to manage that change will determine, to a
great extent, whether ~~it~~ *that change* will become a benefit or a
threat.

So we must increase substantially the opportunities
for vocational training -- in secondary schools as well as
vocational-technical institutes, community colleges
and other institutions of higher learning -- opportunities
that can be integrated with a liberal arts curriculum --
opportunities that should be available to persons of
all ages interested in improving old skills or learning
new ones.

We must increase substantially ⁻⁻ by proper training ⁻⁻
the number of vocational education teachers...of guidance
counselors...and of job placement officers.

-- with your assistance --
We must increase substantially ^{on} the variety of
vocational education programs ^{that we make} available. ~~and we must~~

For we are going to need -- in increasing numbers --
-- trained and educated people --
~~people~~ who are skilled at operating the waste treatment
facilities required to keep our rivers and streams
from becoming polluted;

-- who are capable of improving our health care services -- as medical technicians, hospital workers, and doctors' aides;

-- who are useful in police stations...in courthouses... in correctional institutions -- who can help police and officers, judges and prison wardens make our system of criminal justice what it ought to be.

~~And~~ That is one reason why I voted in the Senate this year -- together with all of the Democrats and a majority of the Republicans ~~voting~~ -- to override the President's veto of ~~educational appropriations~~ appropriations for education -- which included an extra ~~\$27,000~~ ²⁸⁷ \$27,000 for Maine's vocational learning programs.

~~So~~ It may well be necessary to amend and update Federal legislation ~~in the near future~~ -- opportunities for -- to fund new and expanded ~~educational~~ vocational study; -- to aid the part-time student as well as the full-time student; -- to encourage adults to further their education

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Last year, for example, I introduced ~~axiii~~
the Intergovernmental Personnel Act -- an Act ~~whi~~
offer
that would, for the first time, ~~provide~~/Federal assistance to provide
~~training~~/vocational
training for public service personnel at the State
and local level.

That Act passed the Senate last October, and it
is now being considered by the House of Representatives.

If all goes well, it will be on the President's
desk for signature by the end of this ~~year~~ session
of Congress.

