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## **Excerpts From Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie at the Democratic Issues Conference**

Edmund S. Muskie

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# ***"A Responsible Political Party Must Be Responsive To The Problems Which Changing Times And Circumstances Bring To Our State..."***

**U. S. SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE**

(Excerpts from remarks by Senator Muskie at the Democratic Issues Conference January 14, 1962 at Augusta).

Our political success as a party began when we convinced the majority of the electors in Maine that we are a responsible political party.

We convinced them when we demonstrated, by word and by action, that a responsible political party must be responsive to the problems which changing times and circumstances bring to our State; that it must be sensitive to the impact of these problems upon the lives of the people of Maine; and that, in seeking solutions, it must stimulate and be responsive to the thinking of all our people.

We have demonstrated further that a political party cannot be responsive, in the sense which I have just described, unless it is progressive.

When old problems will no longer yield to old answers, we must be ready and able to devise and adopt new answers. When the inexorable movement of events, and of economic, social and political forces, generate new problems, we must be ready and able to recognize them and to do something about them.

A party of responsibility must be a party of ideas, with the ingenuity and the imagination to create ideas of our own, the intelligence and the alertness to recognize and to sponsor good ideas which originate elsewhere.

The courage is necessary to endorse good ideas in advance of public readiness to accept them, and leadership necessary to mobilize public opinion behind them.

The Democratic Party of Maine has been just such a party of ideas.

In the field of industrial development, this has produced the Department of Economic Development, the Industrial Building Authority, a permanent program of geological research, State support for and strengthening of the Maine Port Authority, a program of assistance to Maine business in the procurement of government contracts, the association with the Society of Industrial Realtors — all of which have been increasingly recognized as one of the best approaches to this problem in the nation.

In education, we promoted the program for consolidation of schools, with great increases in the level of State support and in the incentives for greater community effort; a tremendous acceleration in our teacher college program, with strengthened faculties, increased operating revenues, and new buildings; greatly increased support for the University of Maine in its drive for expansion, stronger faculties, better services, and new plant; participation in the establishment of the New England Board of Higher Education with its program to increase educational opportunities; support of the Committee on Educational Television — these and other ideas, translated into programs of action, have been recognized as one of the major advances in education in the history of our State.

We left no important area of State responsibility untouched. We applied ourselves to the whole broad range of problems bearing upon the economy of the State, the conservation and use of our natural resources, the education and training of our people, the care and rehabilitation of the less fortunate among us, and the effectiveness and efficiency of the machinery of government itself.

Even a partial list is impressive:

- The State matching program to supplement Federal and local effort in the construction of sewage treatment plants; and other steps in the drive against polluted waters.
- Repeal of the Fernald Law and reform of the Utility Rate Law to better protect consumers.
- Improvements in the laws and programs affecting the legitimate interests of the men and women who work for a daily wage.
- Massive building programs to relieve severe and chronic overcrowding at State institutions, plus increases in operating funds to enable us to raise the standards of care from the custodial level to the level of rehabilitation.
- Realistic programs of highway financing and planning which resulted in the construction of more hundreds of miles of better roads than in any similar period in the previous history of the State.
- Acquisition of new State parks and increased support for existing parks, coupled with an unparalleled growth in the number and quality of roadside picnic areas.
- Creation of the Hospital Aid Pool, bringing Federal funds into our hospital assistance program, and raising the level of State support for this important work.
- Establishment of the program for improvement and support of nursing home care.
- Establishment of a centralized and unified probation and parole system.

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- Creation of the Bureau of Public Improvements and its resources for intelligently planning and implementing our program for capital improvements. The result has been to give new life, new meaning, and new vigor to our educational, correctional, mental health, and other institutions. No other single step in the history of the State has done more to improve these programs and, at the same time, insure maximum value for the taxpayer's dollar.

- Line budgeting, with the improved control over departmental budgeting and expenditures.

- Under the vigorous and dedicated leadership of the late Brim Jewett, a hard-hitting highway safety program resulting in improved laws and a permanent full-time staff for the Highway Safety Committee.

- The four-year term for the Governor, and the change in the date of our State election. Although these were undoubted improvements on their merits, it is argued that we out-guessed ourselves politically. On that point, the final judgment of history is yet to be written.

Progress was least with respect to improvement in the processes of government. This was not because we lacked ideas. On the contrary, with the assistance of the Public Administration Service and two non-partisan citizens committees, we were able to generate a steady and substantial flow of ideas to make government a more efficient and more effective servant of the people.

And so, we have pursued ideas in a restless, unceasing search. We have probed the brains available in our own party. We have attracted new talent to our ranks. We have unleashed the previously inhibited thinking of the State Department heads and of talented and dedicated civil servants under them. We have consulted experts and amateurs. We have sought the advice of specialists and of rank-and-file citizens. We have even welcomed an occasional idea from the ranks of the opposition.

We have used issues conferences, and task forces, and citizens committees. Publicly and privately, we have asked questions, stimulated discussion, invited controversy, and engaged in debate.

The search has never been an easy one. There has been resistance from the ranks of the opposition, but that, too, has served a useful purpose because it has forced us to resort to the court of public opinion; and the verdicts of that court have been kind to our efforts.

As we review these past eight years, I think it is to the everlasting credit of the Party that we raised the level of public interest in and discussion of public questions to a height seldom, if ever, previously reached in our State. By trusting the people, and inviting their participation, we broadened the scale of that participation to a degree that had few precedents. We injected a new vigor into the Democratic process, a new enthusiasm in the potential of government for constructive service, a new confidence in their ability to use government wisely as an indispensable tool for progress.

This is the real significance of our contribution to our fellow citizens and to the future of Maine. The partial list of specific accomplishments to which I have referred represent great leaps forward which would not have occurred but for our efforts. The momentum for progress which they generated will contribute importantly to the welfare of Maine for many years to come.

However, this momentum can level off, leaving us on another, if higher, level of stagnation, unless there are continual and frequent injections of new energy and new ideas. Already, there are signs that the levelling-off process may be under way. The record of significant new ideas translated into action over the past two years is thin to the vanishing point. To embrace the progressive programs for which we were responsible, without contributing to their logical extension and development, is not progress. It is the same old inertia and fondness for the status quo which has characterized too much of our history in the one hundred years since the Civil War.

Nevertheless, because of the things we have done, because of the approach to government which we have made popular, the climate for progress in Maine is more favorable than it was eight years ago. The people like it and have shown they will demand it. And the reluctant apostles of progress know it.

In the light of the record up-to-date, our duty as a party is clear. Without our participation, in accordance with the standards we have met over the past eight years, the drive toward progress will be inadequate to the needs of Maine.

Let us continue to be the party of ideas, to dare to support ideas we believe to be sound even though public support may be uncertain, and to assert leadership in the task of mobilizing public opinion behind what we believe to be right.

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