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Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie Before the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Edmund S. Muskie

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DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE FOR THE VICE PRESIDENCY
OF THE UNITED STATES
BEFORE THE
ADVISORY COMMISSION ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Thursday, September 19, 1968

San Francisco, California

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City Hall
San Francisco, California
Thursday, September 19, 1968
10:05 a.m.

I am quite accustomed to sitting at meetings of this Commission, and I think I will continue the habit this morning.

I appreciate the opportunity of meeting with you, and I assure you although you may be skeptical about it, that I had this State on my calendar before Chicago.

(Laughter)

But I suspect that because of Chicago, I won't be able to spend as much time with you as I would have otherwise.

I appreciate the very warm welcome which Mayor Alioto has extended to us, and my most present preoccupation the last two days has been to have him welcome me at one place or another in the city. And I think you will concede no one can do it more effectively or more warmly.

He has reminded me at least three times since I came to the city yesterday, that this is the most impressive city hall in the world.

I am prepared to believe it, at least while I am in San Francisco.

(Laughter)

The Mayor suggests that everyone ought to have favorite cities. But candidates for Vice President have to have more than that, Mr. Mayor. Every city he visits has to be a favorite.

I was especially delighted to come here because it serves two purposes that I think all of us have had in mind, or at least one of which all of us have had in mind. We have complained from time to time that the work of this Commission, important as it is, is not the spectacular kind of work that can be reduced into flaming headlines and that attracts the attention

1 of the news media as it should.

2 We have complained time to time that members of the
3 cabinet who are members of the Commission, do not attend more
regularly, in order to attract the attention of the press.

4 It never occurred to me that in my person I would be
5 such an attraction in any way, and, of course, I can use the
6 exposure, too, as an unknown Maine Senator seeking national
office. So I am delighted to be here and hope that both of us
benefit from the exposure.

7 So while we have this attention, I would like to say
8 just a word or two about this Commission, its objectives, and
what it has done.

9 First of all, although I appreciate the references
10 to my own role in its creation, I want to express my own appre-
11 ciation for the real father of this Commission -- Congressman
Fountain, who is here today -- who I think has been the most
conscientious attendor of meetings from the Congressional dele-
gation of this group.

12 I think it is testimony to Lee Fisher who over ten
13 years ago realized at that time, long before many of those who
14 are now speaking on this subject, that the revision of the
Federal System was essential to make it possible for that system
to serve the real needs of twentieth century America.

15 He and I are not carbon copies of each other in our
16 political philosophy or in our view of the responsibilities
that ought to be allocated to different levels of government,
17 but we are in complete agreement that the welfare of our country,
the advance of its people, the improvement of their lives, has
18 much to do with the way in which we organize our governmental
responsibilities, the way in which we distribute these respon-
19 sibilities, as between the three levels of government.

20 But even more importantly, this is a new concept of
the Federal System, I think, the way in which the three levels
21 of government find it possible to combine their resources and
to work together for common goals in partnership, rather than
22 in different directions.

23 I think this is the kind of work that this Commission
has distinguished itself in doing in the years since it was
24 created. I think the number of your reports, is up to some
62 at this point. And I was interested especially in reading
25 this morning's accounts of your latest report on proposals to

1 share the revenues of the Federal Government.

2 This has been a controversial subject which has had
3 more or less visibility over the last two years, and people in
4 both political parties have review teams on it.

5 I have never seen quite the alternatives that you have
6 presented in your report. I think they make a great deal of
7 sense.

8 For those in the press and news media who did not
9 read that story this morning, you proposed first that we continue
10 the idea of specific categorical aids, to develop national
11 directions, in specific problem areas. But secondly, I take
12 it that that has to do with those programs that have been on-
13 going for a long period of time, in which we have developed
14 experience, packaging categorical aids in bloc grants, in
15 particular subject areas as we did in the case of health grants
16 a couple of years ago.

17 These bloc grants presumably would give state and
18 local governments greater discretion to use Federal resources
19 greater discretion to apply them in accordance with the varying
20 needs of cities and states across the country.

21 And then thirdly, you propose the sort of revenue
22 sharing that has been suggested, that is Federal Revenues made
23 available to state and local governments without any strings
24 attached and without relevance to any particular problem areas,
25 in order to buttress the resources of state and local government
in meeting those needs that are not served by Federal programs.

I think this is a common sense approach and suggests
a base, a philosophical base, a program base upon which to build
the future relationships of the three levels of government in
the Federal system.

Now, I would like to say just a word about this meeting
here today. Congressman Fountain and I two or three years ago
chaired a series of hearings to review the first five years of
the work of this commission.

One of the recommendations that came out of that
meeting was that the Commission ought to get out in the country.
Well, this has been consistent, I think, with the new surge of
interest on the part of the public in participation of the
political process.

So I think the work of the Commission ought to go out
in the country. I don't know whether this is the second or this

1 hearing that has been scheduled by the Commission out of the
country in an area in which the Commission is working.

2 The subject here today happens to be Medicaid. I
3 think it is highly appropriate, Mr. Mayor, that we should be
4 holding this hearing in the City of San Francisco, and in the
State of California. Medicare, I think, is an outstanding
5 example of state programs in this area. I think California
6 has something like 10 percent of the population of the country
but something like 20 percent of those who benefit from such
programs are served by Medicare.

7 California, of course, is a state in ferment, it is
8 the fastest growing state, our largest state, it is faced with
growth in people problems on a scale that I think is unprecedented
9 in any other state. And I think to observe how you are meeting
this problem, to study your methods, your programs, your objec-
10 tives, is a most worthwhile thing for the Commission to do,
and I think reflects the Commissions's desire that its work,
11 its recommendations, its proposals reflect the very real needs
and the very real experiences of our Federal System at all three
levels.

12 Well, this is a little bit of a speech that you have
13 got to expect a Senator to make at any time, and a candidate for
Vice President to make at all times, but I think it is timely
14 that these things should be said at a time when we have more
than the usual attention from the news media.

15 I am not going to be able to stay with you very long,
16 because I have a very welcome invitation to address the California
Assembly. But let me assure you I am delighted to be with you
17 as always, and to see the same faithful faces in attendance here
this morning as I have experienced in the years that we have
18 worked together.

19 Thank you very much.

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