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Remarks of Senator Edmund S. Muskie on Youth in Politics at the University of New Hampshire

Edmund S. Muskie

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11/30/71

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

I'M HAPPY TO BE HERE TODAY. WHENEVER I COME TO
A UNIVERSITY, I AM REMINDED OF WHAT SAMUEL JOHNSON SAID
MANY YEARS AGO:

"THERE IS LESS FLOGGING IN OUR GREAT SCHOOLS
THESE DAYS, BUT LESS IS LEARNED THERE. SO I
FEAR WHAT THE BOYS GAIN AT ONE END THEY LOSE AT
THE OTHER."

THIS IS NOT THE MOST MODERN APPROACH TO EDUCATION, BUT
IT STILL HAS SOME ADVANTAGES.

I FEEL A SPECIAL KINSHIP WITH UNH. I AM AN
HONORARY ALUMNUS. IN FACT, I THOUGHT THAT AS AN ALUMNUS
I MIGHT BE ABLE TO GET A HOLD OF YOUR MAILING LISTS. I
WANT TO SEND A CHRISTMAS CARD TO ALL OF YOUR ALUMNI IN
NEW HAMPSHIRE. IT HAS A BALLOT IN IT.

ANOTHER REASON I FEEL KINSHIP IS THAT WE HAVE
BOTH BEEN FLOGGED BY WILLIAM LOEB. WE MUST BE DOING
SOMETHING RIGHT.

MR. LOEB HAS A CANDIDATE IN THE NEW HAMPSHIRE
PRIMARY -- A MAN FROM LOS ANGELES WHO LIKES YOUR CLEAN AIR.

MR. LOEB SAYS MAYOR YORTY SHOULD SPEND THREE MONTHS IN
NEW HAMPSHIRE. SO DO THE PEOPLE OF LOS ANGELES.

BUT YOU SHOULDN'T EXPECT TO SEE VICE PRESIDENT
AGNEW AT UNH. WHEN HE WANTS TO FIND OUT WHAT YOUNG

PEOPLE ARE THINKING, HE STILL ASKS SHIRLEY TEMPLE.

AND I GUESS I SHOULD ALSO MENTION THE ATTORNEY GENERAL. THE OTHER DAY, HE WAS BEING INTERVIEWED BY A SPORTS REPORTER. THE REPORTER ASKED HIM: "MR. ATTORNEY GENERAL, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE INDIANAPOLIS 500?" THE ATTORNEY GENERAL JUMPED UP, POUNDED HIS FIST ON THE TABLE, AND SHOUTED "THEY'RE ALL GUILTY."

OF COURSE, THE PRESIDENT MAY SOON VISIT NEW HAMPSHIRE TO TALK ABOUT HIS INTEREST IN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES. RIGHT NOW, FOR EXAMPLE, HE'S CONCENTRATING VERY HARD ON FINDING NEW TECHNIQUES TO RECYCLE HIS PROMISES.

I AM HERE TODAY, VERY FRANKLY, BECAUSE IF I AM GOING TO BE A CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY NEXT YEAR, I AM GOING TO HAVE TO COME TO NEW HAMPSHIRE AND WORK HARD IN THIS STATE AND TALK TO YOU, AS VOTERS, ABOUT YOUR CONCERNS, JUST AS I TALK WITH YOUR PARENTS ABOUT THEIR CONCERNS.

I CAN'T TAKE NEW HAMPSHIRE FOR GRANTED, AND I
DON'T THINK THE PEOPLE OF THIS STATE WOULD WANT ME TO.

I HAVE HEARD IT SAID THAT STUDENTS DON'T CARE
ANY MORE ABOUT PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND THAT THEY HAVE GONE
BACK TO THEIR BOOKS. I DON'T BELIEVE THIS. IT'S NOT
WHAT I SEE WHEN I TRAVEL ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

OF COURSE YOU ARE DISCOURAGED WITH THE WAY THE
POLITICAL SYSTEM SEEMS TO WORK. SOME OF YOU TRIED THAT
SYSTEM IN 1968 AND ENDED UP UNDER ARREST, AND WE ENDED
UP UNDER RICHARD NIXON AND JOHN MITCHELL. IN 1970,
AT THE TIME OF CAMBODIA AND KENT STATE, MANY OF YOU
TRIED ANOTHER APPROACH, OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM, THROUGH
STUDENT STRIKES AND PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATIONS. THAT
DIDN'T WORK EITHER. WE ARE STILL IN SOUTHEAST ASIA,
AND THERE IS NO END IN SIGHT.

IN 1972, YOU HAVE ANOTHER CHANCE, ~~OR~~ WHAT I
REALLY MEAN IS THAT WE, THE POLITICAL LEADERS OF THIS
COUNTRY, HAVE ANOTHER CHANCE, BECAUSE IT IS OUR

RESPONSIBILITY TO CONVINCE YOU THAT CHANGE AND PROGRESS
CAN TAKE PLACE PEACEFULLY.

NEXT YEAR'S ELECTIONS WILL PROBABLY BE DECIDED
BY THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE NEVER VOTED FOR A PRESIDENT
BEFORE, ^{SO} ~~AND~~ I THINK ALL THE CANDIDATES, ANNOUNCED AND
UNANNOUNCED, ACTIVE AND PASSIVE, SHOULD BE ON NOTICE,
IF THEY ARE NOT ALREADY, THAT THEY ARE ABOUT TO BE
JUDGED BY A GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE BRIGHT, WHO
ARE DISSATISFIED, WHO KNOW WHAT THEY WANT, AND WHO ARE
VERY GOOD AT SPOTTING PHONIES AND SIFTING DEEDS FROM
RHETORIC.

JOBS ARE GOING TO BE AN ISSUE -- AND I HOPE YOU
WILL ASK MY POSITION ABOUT THAT.

Pollution
~~IS GOING TO BE AN ISSUE, AND I HOPE~~
YOU WILL ASK MY POSITION ON THAT, ~~EVEN THOUGH YOU MAY~~

~~BEING ASKED~~

BUT I THINK THE OVERRIDING ISSUE IN NEXT YEAR'S
CAMPAIGN IS GOING TO BE THE CREDIBILITY OF THE OFFICE
OF THE PRESIDENT.

I WANT TO HEAR A PRESIDENT SAY, JUST ONCE, THAT
IT WAS WRONG TO SEND AMERICAN TROOPS INTO VIET NAM.

I WANT TO HEAR A PRESIDENT ANNOUNCE THAT EVERY
AMERICAN SOLDIER IS COMING HOME FROM INDOCHINA NOW.

I WANT TO HEAR THE NEXT PRESIDENT SAY ~~THAT~~
THAT THE WAR IN VIET NAM DOES NOT END FOR THIS COUNTRY
WHEN AMERICAN DEATHS END -- IT ENDS WHEN ALL THE KILLING
STOPS, VIETNAMESE, OR CAMBODIANS, OR LAOTIANS, AS WELL
AS AMERICANS.

AND I WANT A PRESIDENT WHO WILL PROVE AGAIN THAT
THERE CAN BE CONVICTION AND CONCERN AND MORAL LEADERSHIP
IN THE HIGHEST OFFICE IN THIS LAND.

THE MACHINERY WE CALL POLITICS CAN WORK. I HAVE
DEVOTED MY CAREER TO THAT BELIEF.

IT COULD A FEED A HUNGRY CHILD IN MISSISSIPPI
OR EAST PAKISTAN.

IT COULD STOP A BRUTAL WAR HALF A WORLD AWAY.

IT CAN CLEAN THE POISON FROM OUR AIR AND WATERS.

AND IT CAN ENHANCE THE STANDARD OF LIFE FOR
EVERY CITIZEN IN THIS COUNTRY.

IT CAN ALSO FAIL TO DO THESE THINGS. AND ITS
ULTIMATE SUCCESS OR FAILURE MAY DEPEND ON THE DECISIONS
WHICH YOU AND YOUR GENERATION MAKE IN THE MONTHS AHEAD.

I AM CONVINCED THAT YOUR GENERATION CAN CHANGE
AMERICA. YOU WILL NOT SUCCEED IMMEDIATELY OR COMPLETELY.
BUT ~~ARE~~ YOU WILL TO TRY?

THAT IS MY QUESTION -- AND NOW I WOULD BE HAPPY
TO ANSWER YOURS.