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Speeches

Edmund S. Muskie Papers

1-11-1972

Excerpts From Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie at Pulaski High School

Edmund S. Muskie

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*I had a car take that one
Boyle - finish
Two-faced*

EXCERPTS FROM REMARKS BY SENATOR EDMUND S.
MUSKIE, PULASKI HIGH SCHOOL, PULASKI,
WISCONSIN, 10:00 A.M., January 11, 1972

I AM HERE TODAY AS A CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY
OF THE UNITED STATES. BY PROFESSION, I AM A POLITICIAN.
AND I KNOW THAT IN THE MIDST OF A CAMPAIGN, POLITICIANS
TEND TO MAKE TOO MANY SPEECHES AND TOO LITTLE SENSE.

THAT'S WHY I OFTEN CHOOSE A QUESTION AND ANSWER
FORMAT AT A COLLEGE OR HIGH SCHOOL. IT GIVES YOU A
CHANCE TO SEE ME AS I AM, INSTEAD OF LOOKING FOR THE
HUMAN BEING BEHIND A LONG, PREPARED SPEECH.

IT GIVES ME A CHANCE TO TALK WITH YOU FACE TO FACE
ABOUT YOUR REAL CONCERNS. IF I AM HONEST, YOU WILL
KNOW IT -- AND THAT WILL BE GOOD FOR ME. AND IF I CAN
PERSUADE YOU TO TAKE PART IN THE POLITICS OF 1972, THAT
WILL BE GOOD FOR THE COUNTRY.

BEFORE I START TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS, I WOULD LIKE TO SPEND A FEW MINUTES DISCUSSING AN ISSUE WHICH SOMETIMES SEEMS VERY FAR AWAY, BUT COULD STRIKE CLOSE TO YOU AT ANY TIME. I AM TALKING ABOUT THE LONGEST AND MOST DIVISIVE WAR IN OUR NATION'S HISTORY.

BEFORE ANY OF YOU WERE BORN, MEN WERE FIGHTING AND DYING IN VIETNAM. AMERICAN WEAPONS AND AMERICAN WEALTH WERE COMMITTED TO THE CONFLICT. AND AN AMERICAN SECRETARY OF STATE URGED US TO STAND FAST SO THAT WE WOULD NOT HAVE TO SEND ANOTHER GENERATION OF OUR CHILDREN OFF TO WAR.

WE STOOD FAST. YOU ARE ANOTHER GENERATION. AND SOME OF YOU COULD BE SENT OFF TO WAR, BECAUSE WE STILL DO NOT KNOW WHEN THE PAIN AND AGONY IN INDOCHINA WILL FINALLY END.

Pulaski High School, January 11, 1972

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OUR PRESENT LEADERS TALK ABOUT WITHDRAWING --
AND THEN THEY THREATEN TO LEAVE THOUSANDS OF
AMERICANS BEHIND FOR AN INDEFINITE TIME.

OUR LEADERS SAY THEY ARE WINDING DOWN THE WAR --
AND THEN THEY RESUME THE BOMBING WHICH WAS STOPPED
IN 1968.

THEY DEMAND FREEDOM FOR OUR PRISONERS OF WAR --
AND THEN THEY REFUSE TO SET A DATE FOR WITHDRAWAL,
WHICH IS THE ONLY WAY TO BRING HUNDREDS OF AMERICANS
HOME FROM PRISON CELLS IN NORTH VIETNAM.

I AM OFTEN TOLD THAT THE WAR IS NO LONGER A
POLITICAL ISSUE. I AGREE, BECAUSE I BELIEVE IT IS
FAR MORE THAN THAT. WHAT IS NOW HAPPENING IN INDOCHINA
IS A MORAL ISSUE.

IT WILL REMAIN AN ISSUE FOR ME AS LONG AS A
SINGLE AMERICAN SON DIES, NOT FOR A CAUSE, BUT FOR
A MISTAKE.

IT WILL REMAIN A CAUSE FOR ME AS LONG AS OUR
BOMBS AND BULLETS ARE KILLING PEOPLE IN HUTS AND
VILLAGES HALF A WORLD AWAY. . . . PEOPLE WHO DO NOT
KNOW THE NAME OF THEIR NATION, LET ALONE THE REASON
FOR THEIR DYING.

THE CURRENT

SOME COMMENTATORS ARE NOW CALLING ~~A WEEKLY~~ CASUALTY
RATE ^S ~~OF TEN AMERICANS~~ ACCEPTABLE. ACCEPTABLE TO WHOM?
NOT TO THEIR FAMILIES. NOT TO THEIR FRIENDS. NOT TO
THE COMMUNITIES IN WHICH THEY WOULD HAVE LIVED AND WORKED AND
RAISED CHILDREN. AND NO RATE OF CASUALTIES IN A WAR
THAT IS WRONG SHOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO A COUNTRY THAT
BELIEVES IN WHAT IS RIGHT.

THE COSTS OF THAT WAR INCLUDE MORE THAN LIVES
AND HUMAN SUFFERING. THE COSTS INCLUDE THE LOSS OF
VITAL RESOURCES. IN THE LAST THREE YEARS WE HAVE
SPENT 50 BILLION DOLLARS IN INDOCHINA . . . 50 BILLION
DOLLARS THAT DID NOT TEACH OUR CHILDREN, NOR PROTECT
OUR FAMILIES, NOR CURE OUR DISEASES, NOR CLEAN OUR
AIR, NOR RECTIFY INJUSTICE.

AND THIS IS WHAT OUR LEADERS NOW CALL A GENERATION
OF PEACE.

IN THE 1968 CAMPAIGN, MILLIONS WHO WERE YOUR AGE
THEN HEARD THE PLEDGE TO STOP THE WAR. SOME OF THEM
LATER FOUGHT IN THAT WAR, MONTHS AND EVEN A YEAR OR
MORE AFTER IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE OVER. . . AND SOME OF
THEM HAVE DIED. I DO NOT WANT THE SAME THING TO HAPPEN
AGAIN.

I HAVE NO SECRET PLAN FOR PEACE. I HAVE AN OPEN
PLAN FOR PEACE.

I BELIEVE WE SHOULD BRING AMERICAN TROOPS HOME
BY BRINGING ALL OF THEM HOME.

I BELIEVE YESTERDAY WAS TOO LATE, AND TOMORROW
IS NOT TOO SOON FOR US TO LEAVE INDOCHINA.

THIS IS MY PLEDGE: AS PRESIDENT, I WOULD SET A
DATE CERTAIN WHEN EVERY AMERICAN SOLDIER, SAILOR, AND
AIRMAN WOULD BE HOME FROM VIETNAM. THERE ARE ONLY TWO
CONDITIONS: THE RELEASE OF OUR PRISONERS OF WAR AND
THE SAFETY OF OUR TROOPS AS THEY WITHDRAW.

AND AS WE WITHDRAW, WE MUST NEGOTIATE -- NOT ONLY
TO FREE OURSELVES FROM THE WAR IN INDOCHINA -- BUT TO
HELP FREE THE PEOPLE OF INDOCHINA FROM THAT WAR. WE
MAY NOT LIKE THE SHAPE OF THE FINAL SETTLEMENT, BUT WE

MUST NOW RECOGNIZE THAT WE CANNOT CHART ANOTHER
NATION'S FUTURE WITH OUR FIREPOWER.

WHEN I ANNOUNCED MY DECISION TO SEEK THE PRESIDENCY,
I SPOKE OF A NEW BEGINNING FOR AMERICA. THE CRUCIAL
FIRST STEP IS TO END THE KILLING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.
THEN WE CAN PUT THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE PAST BEHIND US.
THEN WE CAN TURN AGAIN TO THE UNFINISHED WORK OF THE
COMMON ENTERPRISE WE CALL AMERICA.

SOME OF YOU WILL VOTE IN THE PRIMARY THIS APRIL,
AND MORE OF YOU WILL VOTE NEXT NOVEMBER. I HOPE TO PLAY
A PART IN BOTH OF THOSE ELECTIONS.

ULTIMATELY, OF COURSE, WHAT IS AT STAKE IS YOUR
FUTURE -- WHETHER YOU GO TO WAR, OR TO COLLEGE, OR TO
A JOB. . . WHETHER YOU WILL HAVE A DECENT CHANCE TO
ACHIEVE YOUR POTENTIAL IN A SOCIETY AT PEACE WITH
ITSELF AND WITH OTHER NATIONS.

Pulaski High School, January 11, 1972

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I THINK YOU DESERVE SOMETHING MORE THAN A WAR
THAT WAS OLD WHEN YOU WERE NOT YET YOUNG.

WILL YOU JOIN IN AN EFFORT TO QUIET THE GUNS IN
VIETNAM AND MAKE A NEW BEGINNING IN AMERICA?

THAT IS MY QUESTION TO YOU.

AND NOW I WOULD BE HAPPY TO ANSWER YOURS.

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