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Speeches

Edmund S. Muskie Papers

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## Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie at Southern Illinois University

Edmund S. Muskie

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REMARKS BY SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

TUESDAY, JANUARY 25, 1972 -- 7:15 P.M.

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I AM HERE TODAY AS A CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT OF THE  
UNITED STATES.

I AM HERE TO ASK FOR YOUR HELP -- FOR THE HELP OF THE  
PEOPLE IN THIS COMMUNITY -- AND FOR THE HELP OF THE STUDENTS ON  
THIS CAMPUS, WHO ARE YOUNG ENOUGH TO BE IMPATIENT, AND OLD ENOUGH  
TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

I WANT YOU TO GET INVOLVED IN THE CAMPAIGN AHEAD. . . IF  
NOT FOR ME, FOR SOMEONE ELSE.

AND I WANT YOU TO KNOW EXACTLY WHAT'S AT STAKE.

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY LOST THE ELECTION IN 1968 BECAUSE  
MILLIONS OF YOUNG AMERICANS DECIDED TO SIT IT OUT. TOO MANY  
OF THOSE WHO COULD HAVE VOTED DECIDED TO STAY HOME. AND MOST  
OF THOSE WHO COULD NOT VOTE REFUSED TO WORK. THEY THOUGHT THERE  
WAS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CANDIDATES.

AND THEY WERE WRONG -- TERRIBLY AND PROFOUNDLY WRONG.

THE ELECTION IN 1968 DID MATTER, AND IT STILL MATTERS TODAY.

IT STILL MATTERS TO THE FIVE MILLION WORKERS WHO HAVE LOST THEIR JOBS.

IT STILL MATTERS TO THE TWENTY-FIVE MILLION PEOPLE WHO DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT.

IT STILL MATTERS TO THE 2000 FAMILY FARMERS WHO EACH WEEK SEE THEIR LAND BOUGHT UP BY HUGE CORPORATIONS.

IT MATTERS TO THE FAMILIES OF THE TWENTY THOUSAND AMERICAN SONS KILLED IN VIETNAM SINCE RICHARD NIXON BECAME PRESIDENT. . . TO OUR SOLDIERS WHO STILL LANGUISH IN COMMUNIST PRISON CAMPS. . . AND TO THE CIVILIAN CASUALTIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, WHO SELDOM KNOW THE NAME OF THEIR COUNTRY, LET ALONE THE CAUSE OF THEIR DYING.

AND WHAT HAPPENED IN 1968 STILL MATTERS TO EVERY AMERICAN WHO WONDER'S WHY OUR LEADERS WILL NOT TELL THE TRUTH.

YOU CANNOT SEPARATE YOURSELVES FROM THOSE AMERICANS AND THEIR NEEDS. THEIR NEEDS ARE YOUR NEEDS. THEIR FEARS AND FRUSTRATIONS ARE YOURS. THEIR HOPES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS ARE YOURS. AS MUCH AS ANY OTHER GROUP IN OUR SOCIETY, YOU ARE AMERICA.

YOU CARE ABOUT THE WAR IN VIETNAM -- NOT JUST BECAUSE IT IS WRONG FOR YOU , . . WRONG FOR YOU TO FIGHT THERE AND TO DIE THERE -- BUT BECAUSE IT IS WRONG FOR AMERICA.

IF I WERE PRESIDENT, I WOULD END THAT WAR WITHOUT DELAY. I WILL END IT -- NOT BY DROPPING MORE BOMBS -- BUT BY WITHDRAWING EVERY SOLDIER, SAILOR, AND AIRMAN FROM VIETNAM. I WOULD END IT BY NEGOTIATING A SETTLEMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA . . . FREEDOM FOR OUR PRISONERS . . . AND PEACE FOR THE PEOPLE OF INDOCHINA. I WOULD DO THESE THINGS BECAUSE THEY ARE RIGHT . . . RIGHT FOR YOU, AND RIGHT FOR AMERICA.


YOU ALSO CARE ABOUT THE HIGHEST UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN TEN YEARS . . . NOT JUST BECAUSE YOU FEEL COMPASSION FOR DISPLACED WORKERS WITH FAMILIES TO SUPPORT . . . BUT BECAUSE THE PROBLEM REACHES INTO YOUR LIVES ON THIS CAMPUS.

IT TOUCHES THE ENGINEER FROM THE CLASS OF '71 WHO IS MOWING LAWNS INSTEAD OF BUILDING BRIDGES.

IT TOUCHES THE EDUCATION MAJOR WHO IS SELLING ENCYCLOPEDIAS  
INSTEAD OF TEACHING CHILDREN HOW TO READ THEM.

AND IT TOUCHES COUNTLESS COLLEGE GRADUATES EVERYWHERE,  
WHO SPEND THEIR DAYS WAITING FOR A POSITION THAT NEVER SEEMS TO  
OPEN UP.

AS PRESIDENT, I WILL FIGHT TO GUARANTEE A JOB FOR EVERY  
WORKER. RICHARD NIXON HAS REFUSED TO DO THAT. HE HAS OPPOSED OR  
VETOED VIRTUALLY EVERY EMPLOYMENT BILL THE CONGRESS HAS PASSED.  
INSTEAD, HE GAVE US AN \$80 BILLION TAX CUT FOR BIG BUSINESS. . . A  
NEW PROSPERITY WHICH WILL LEAVE UNEMPLOYMENT 40% HIGHER THAN WHEN  
HE TOOK OFFICE.

THAT IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR AMERICA. WE NEED NEW  
PROGRAMS. . . PROGRAMS WHICH WILL PUT OUR PEOPLE BACK TO WORK, IN  
THE HOSPITALS AND NURSING HOMES, THE PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS, THE  
STREETS AND THE SCHOOLS WHERE THEIR TALENTS AND SKILLS ARE NEEDED  
THE MOST. I  SUPPORT THOSE PROGRAMS BECAUSE THEY ARE RIGHT. . .  
RIGHT FOR YOU. . . AND RIGHT FOR AMERICA.

THE MACHINERY WE CALL POLITICS CAN DO THESE THINGS AND SO MUCH MORE. IT CAN FEED 300,000 HUNGRY CHILDREN IN MISSISSIPPI. IT CAN KEEP THE FAMILY FARMER ON HIS LAND. AND IT CAN RESTORE OUR FAITH AND TRUST IN GOVERNMENT.

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 WEEKS AND MONTHS AHEAD.

YOU CANNOT AFFORD TO SIT OUT THE NEXT ELECTION. YOU CAN DECIDE IT. YOU HAVE THE POWER TO VOTE, AND THAT MAKES YOU RESPONSIBLE FOR THE OUTCOME.

I NEED YOUR HELP. I NEED YOUR HEARTS AND YOUR MINDS AND YOUR SUPPORT. AND I NEED YOUR IMPATIENCE. IT WAS THE IMPATIENCE OF THE YOUNG THAT TURNED OUR PEOPLE AGAINST AN IMMORAL WAR IN INDOCHINA. AND YOUR IMPATIENCE CAN TAKE THIS COUNTRY TO A NEW PRESIDENT AND A NEW BEGINNING IN 1972.

YOU CAN START HERE, IN SOUTHERN ILLINOIS. YOU CAN HELP ME BY HELPING THE CANDIDATES FOR THE ILLINOIS DELEGATION WHO ARE RUNNING IN THIS DISTRICT PLEDGED TO ME. TWO OF THEM ARE STUDENTS AND ONE IS A PROFESSOR AT THIS UNIVERSITY.

YOU CAN START HERE. . . AND YOU CAN RAISE A VOICE THAT WILL BE  
HEARD AND HEEDED IN THE FAR CORNERS OF OUR COUNTRY.

YOU CANNOT GO BACK TO OTHER TIMES. YOU ARE NO LONGER  
WOODSTOCK NATION. BUT YOU CAN CHANGE AMERICA, HERE AND NOW. YOU  
CAN MAKE IT BETTER THAN IT IS.

WILL YOU SETTLE FOR THE WRONG THE SYSTEM DOES. . . OR WILL  
YOU WORK FOR THE RIGHT THAT IT CAN DO?

WILL YOU SETTLE FOR AN OLD POLITICS, OR WILL YOU MAKE A  
NEW BEGINNING?

THAT IS MY QUESTION.

AND NOW I WOULD BE HAPPY TO ANSWER YOURS.

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