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Edmund S. Muskie Papers

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Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie at the West Virginia State Capitol

Edmund S. Muskie

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1 REMARKS OF THE HONORABLE EDMUND S. MUSKIE
2 DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE FOR THE VICE PRESIDENCY OF THE UNITED STATES
3 ON THE STATE CAPITOL GROUNDS
4 CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA

5 - - -

6 State Capitol Grounds
7 Charleston, West Virginia
8 Tuesday, September 24, 1968

9 I have enjoyed campaigning around the country, as has
10 apparently, my counterpart on the Republican ticket -- Governor
11 Agnew. The Governor has told us that what we need is to develop
12 a national sense of humor, and I must say he is doing his best
13 to help us develop it.

14 I sympathize with him, because I have gotten into
15 some of those snarls myself. I remember when I was in Campbell,
16 Ohio the other day, I stood up before an enthusiastic audience
17 and expressed my gratification at speaking to the people of
18 Youngstown. That happened when I had been campaigning less
19 than two weeks.

20 And as I think of Governor Agnew's problems and my own,
21 I think of that wonderful Maine story of the man who was thinking
22 of running for office against the incumbent senator, and he
23 discussed it with a friend and he asked his friend for his
24 opinion.

25 He said, "Do I have a chance?" His friend said, "Well,
that depends on which of you sees the most voters. If he sees
the most voters, you will win. If you see the most voters, he
will win."

Mr. Nixon reminds me of another Maine story. You know
my people up there aren't very talkative and out-of-staters are
quite frustrated whenever they try to get a Maine man engaged
in conversation. I -remember one out-of-stater with frustration
said, "Do you have a law against talking up here?" "No," the
native said, "but we have an understanding that we won't say
anything that doesn't improve on silence."

(Laughter)

Well, Mr. Nixon hasn't improved on silence since the
campaign began.

(Applause)

On the subject of Vietnam, for example, you remember last Spring when he was campaigning hard against Governor Rockefeller for the Republican nomination that he told us that he had a plan for peace in Vietnam but that of course he wouldn't discuss it until after the election. And he was criticized somewhat in that primary campaign for failure to give us the benefits of his wisdom.

Well, this week Governor Agnew, trying to be helpful as always, confessed that they had no peace plan at all.

And on the subject of crime, Mr. Nixon's one answer is to vote Republican. He has so little confidence in the good sense and the judgment of the American people that he would suggest that on this complex, frustrating, and disturbing issue, all we need to do is to change the Party label on the White House to solve the problem.

If I were to use his line of reasoning, I would point out that 13 of the 15 States with the highest crime rates in the country have Republican governors; that 22 of the 24 States with the lowest crime rates in the country have Democratic governors.

(Applause)

I would point out that the State of Maine has the fifth lowest crime rate in the country, West Virginia has the second lowest crime rate in the country,--

(Cheers and Applause)

-- and the state of Maryland the highest rate in the country for violent crimes.

I would point out that in 1960, with respect to our campaign against organized crime, the Organized Crime Division of the Department of Justice was able to develop 17 convictions. In 1967, we had 688 convictions.

But I would not be so irresponsible as to suggest that crime wears a Party label, or that concern for crime carries a Party label, or that effectiveness against crime carries a Party label.

All of us in America are aware that the first responsibility of an organized society is to protect its people, to protect their lives, to protect their families, to protect their

1 communities, to protect their streets, to protect their property
2 against those criminal elements whose instinct and whose habit
and whose lives are devoted to preying upon the peaceful citizens
of any society.

3
4 (Applause)

5 Indeed, this is one of the principal reasons why the
6 founding fathers established a government of the people, by the
7 people, and for the people in 1787. They understood that the
only real way to buy security and safety in any society is to
create one in which every member of it has a real chance to
improve his own life.

8 (Applause)

9 They understood also that when we became a crowded
10 society, and industrialized society, a society in which people
were crowded together in unacceptable living conditions, that
we would have a problem of disorder and unrest.

11 Thomas Jefferson put it this way: He said, "When we
12 begin to pile ourselves upon one another as they do in Europe,
we will begin to eat one another as they do in Europe."

13 The fact is that no society in the entire history of
14 mankind has solved the problem created by multitudes of
different kinds of people living together. No society in the
15 history of man has made it possible to so arrange that kind of
a problem as to make it possible for different kinds of people
16 to live in harmony.

17 Indeed, we have thought since 1789 that we had found
18 the answer to this problem, that we had found a way by creating
a society in which every citizen could hope for improvement. But
19 we have now reached the point that was feared by Jefferson and
others of the founders, the point where we are crowded, where
not all of our people can hope for improvement in their lives,
20 where all of our people cannot hope for opportunity for their
children.

21 And whenever this happens in any society -- the whole
22 history of man is filled with this story -- people will rebel.
They will dissent, they will protest, they will work with all
23 their hearts and minds for that basic decency and dignity and
opportunity and security which is the dream of every human being.

24 That is the problem we face today and the answer to
25 it is not the policeman's night stick --

1 (Applause)

2 --The answer to it is to deal effectively with those
3 conditions which deny people opportunity, which deprive them
4 of an equal chance, which discriminates against them for one
5 or another reason which is unacceptable in the sight of God.
6 It is as simple as that.

7 We are told in this campaign by one candidate that the
8 way to build a secure society is to build a wall between some of
9 our people and others of our people. We who have our roots in
10 Europe know that when you build walls between people, you build
11 hate, and when you build hate, you build insecurity and crime
12 and disorder and violence for every member of that society.

13 We have understood that in this country and for 180
14 years we have worked at creating opportunity for every American.
15 We have not reached the ultimate, we have not reached our ultimate
16 goal, but we have come closer to it than any society ever
17 has.

18 And I say to you that 1968 is not the time to begin
19 to doubt that we were right for 180 years; that 1968 is not the
20 time to doubt Washington and Jefferson and Franklin and all of
21 their colleagues who believed that freedom for everyone was the
22 answer to safety and security.

23 (Applause)

24 Now, what does Mr. Nixon have to say about all of this?
25 Nothing.

26 He has told us condescendingly that he will have a
27 press conference every eight days, not more frequently, and thus
28 far in every press conference the questions have all been
29 screened. Why?

30 He has refused to appear since 1966 on a national
31 "Meet the Press" type program, to face the tough questions that
32 are asked in those interviews. Why?

33 He has not yet committed himself to debates with the
34 Vice President or with Mr. Wallace. Why?

35 Well, I think there are very simple answers that we are
entitled to speculate upon.

36 In the first place, he feels he is ahead and that he
37 doesn't need to discuss the issues of this campaign in the way
38 that you have to discuss them when you are cross-examined two or

1 three times a day by the press, when you meet these national
2 panels on television, or when you meet your opponent in debate.

3 He feels that in this election year of 1968 that the
4 American people had never had more urgent business -- the busi-
5 ness of war and peace, the business of unrest in our society,
6 the business of the relationships between the races -- he does
7 not think it necessary to speak as fully and as frankly and as
8 much in detail and subject to the challenge of his opposition
9 as the American people are entitled to in this year 1968.

10 (Applause)

11 I think there is another reason. He doesn't want to
12 be asked about his record. A lot of people seem to have for-
13 gotten that he had a record as Vice President, which ought to
14 be of interest to you people in West Virginia.

15 I have had the pleasure of working with your two
16 senators and your governor on such programs as Appalachia, on
17 such programs as Environmental Pollution, on such programs as
18 Area Redevelopment. And on all of these national programs
19 aimed at economic growth for you and the other people of the
20 country. And what is Mr. Nixon's record?

21 He was Vice President when his President vetoed two
22 housing bills and he has never repudiated that action.

23 He was Vice President when his President vetoed two
24 Area Redevelopment Bills and he has never repudiated that action.

25 He was Vice President when his President vetoed a
very modest bill to raise the national investment in water
cleanup from 50 million dollars to 90 million dollars a year,
and he never repudiated that action.

Mr. Nixon stood by his Party as Vice President in
opposition to the Medicare Program, which protects retired
citizens against catastrophic medical costs and he has never
repudiated his own position with respect to that program.

The fact is that as Mr. Nixon campaigns up and down
this country, talking about law and order and justice, his
record on the justice end of that formula is dismally poor.
And he is asking us to elect him, to heal our country, to bridge
the gap between our people, to unite a divided people, to cure
the problems of the cities, to clean up the environment, when
his record as Vice President for eight years and his record in
the 1960 presidential campaign was one of unswerving, unquali-
fied support of policies which worked against the solution of

these problems.

(Applause)

No concern about unrest, no concern about unrest among people who are deprived, who are discriminated against, who are disadvantaged. But has it occurred to you that in eight years, from 1952 to 1960, a Republican Administration had an opportunity to deal with those problems and did nothing about them?

The President vetoed 169 pieces of legislation in that time, including those I have already described. And in that eight year period, we had three recessions.

You people in West Virginia remember that. Three recessions, which costs us 175 billion dollars in production.

Now, that is a lot of money, but what does it mean to people?

It means that they couldn't live as well, it means they couldn't house themselves as well, it means they couldn't educate their children as well, it means they couldn't build their communities as well, it means that state, local, and federal government couldn't provide the programs of aid to education that we needed in order to eliminate the inequities and inequalities in our society. It means that we couldn't afford to provide health care for the elderly. It means that we couldn't provide the necessary health facilities for people.

This is what happened in the 1950's.

And what happened in the 60's?

Beginning almost immediately with that historic decision by President Kennedy to upgrade the food program for the hungry -- an action he took in the first 30 days in office -- we have had 90 unbroken months of an expanding economy. And in that time, we have increased our national production by 350 billion dollars, with the result that Americans are living better, that more kids are going to college, that we are able to double our investment in education, that we are able to double our investment in health, that we are able to greatly expand our programs of pollution cleanup, that we are able to focus more of our resources upon the problems of the cities, that we are able to expand our housing programs, that we are able to stimulate the growth of the economy not only in the richest states but even the more remote areas of our country.

And this is what you need to deal with the social problems of our country -- economic growth. And compare the

1 Nixon Administration with the administration of which Vice Presi-
2 dent Humphrey was a part.

3 We need to mount programs of investment in housing and
4 education and urban cleanup. And on this one compare the Nixon
5 Administration with that of which Vice President Humphrey has
6 been a part.

7 This is the record that we need to make. A policeman's
8 stick, important as are the enforcement agencies, is not the
9 answer to these social problems.

10 (Applause)

11 And the only candidate, the only candidates who are
12 really talking about social justice in a way that will effectively
13 deal with the underlying causes of unrest, instability, disorder,
14 and violence, are the Democratic candidates for President and
15 Vice President.

16 (Applause)

17 Now, we are fighting an uphill fight in this campaign,
18 and you people in West Virginia who supported President Kennedy
19 in 1960 know what an uphill fight means, and you know how an
20 uphill fight can be won.

21 (Applause)

22 We need your help as he needed your help in 1960. And
23 we need it to pursue the same goals that he pursued in the
24 campaign of 1960.

25 We need it to do the very same things that he undertook
to do as President from 1960 to 1963 -- an effort that has been
built upon by this Administration, by a Democratic Congress, and
by a Democratic Party which has addressed itself to the same
problems in all of our 50 States.

We need your help, not so much for us, but in order to
build a united, a freedom loving, a peace loving, a safe and
secure America, of opportunity for every living American and
for every American to come in the generations that lie ahead.

We need your help and I ask it today.

(Applause)

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