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Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie at a Public Rally in Taylor, Michigan

Edmund S. Muskie

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REMARKS BY HONORABLE EDMUND S. MUSKIE,
UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF MAINE,
DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE TO BE VICE PRESIDENT
OF THE UNITED STATES

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Public Rally

Taylor Shopping Center

Taylor, Michigan

Wednesday, September 25, 1968

SENATOR MUSKIE: I am delighted to be back here in Michigan. I think the first time I ever made a political speech in Michigan was in the year 1954, after I had just been elected Governor of the State of Maine.

At that time, I came here to campaign for Kennedy in the State of Michigan, and today I am afraid I am coming to solicit votes for myself, and that great Vice President, Hubert Humphrey.

(Applause and boos.)

I understand you have some skeptics among you. Well, I have run into that in my State as well. Up there, we call them Republicans.

(Applause.)

But they, at least, give us a chance to speak up there.

I have been traveling now from coast to coast,

1 talking to people, and I don't know how many States at this
2 point, about the problems that confront the country, about
3 what we hope to do about them.

4 And I find it possible to talk to most people, and
5 to talk reasonably and objectively and meaningfully about
6 these problems. People are disturbed, as they should be,
7 about the war. They are disturbed, as they should be, about
8 unrest in our cities, about unrest among our young people,
9 about unrest among those in our society who do not yet have
10 an equal chance to improve their own lives and the lives of
11 their children.

12 Notwithstanding the fact that 180 years ago we
13 started out to a the objective of an equality of opportunity
14 in our country, we have not yet achieved it.

15 And at a time when America as a whole is more pros-
16 perous, stronger economically, than at any time in our own
17 history, stronger than any nation has ever been in the history
18 of man, at this very moment we began to have doubt among our
19 people that this system would work.

20 Now, you and I have our roots in the Old World.
21 Our fathers or our grandfathers came to this country looking
22 for opportunity, looking for a chance to get ahead, looking
23 for an opportunity to improve their lives, and looking for
24 an opportunity to find a better life for their children.

25 I think I can speak for my father, and I am sure

for those who preceded you, in the conviction that here in America we do indeed have the best opportunity on earth for the average American to get ahead.

My life is a demonstration of that fact. My father believed that his life was a demonstration of that fact. In the last 30 years, I have seen American move from a low point in 1932, when the working men and women of Michigan and Maine could not get jobs, could not provide food for their families, could not get decent housing, and had no hope for improvement in the foreseeable future.

We have moved from that time when the gross national product, the value of everything we produced in America, was only \$40 billion, to this point in 1968 when the value of everything we produce is close to a trillion dollars.

Now, these figures in and of themselves are meaningless. But what they do mean is that today those who in 1932 could not get work are today working. Those in 1932 who had no hope, today have hope, have cars, have the material benefits of a free society, and more than that, have built up momentum in our country which promises for future Americans an even better life than we have today.

(Cheers and applause.)

I am particularly struck about what we have done to improve educational opportunities in our country. Education is the foundation of any free society. In 1932,

there were virtually no opportunities for an education, unless a youngster could find the all too rare opportunities to work, or unless their parents came from good, well-to-do backgrounds.

When I began college in 1932, I didn't know that I could finance the second month of my college education. And then Franklin Roosevelt, ---

(Chants of "Mr. Wallace.")

A VOICE: "We want to hear you."

SENATOR MUSKIE: Oh, no, let's hear the man out. He has something to say. I would be glad to hear it.

A VOICE: "You dn 't have a thing we want to hear.

We want Wallace." (Chants of "We want Wallace," and "We want Muskie.")

SENATOR MUSKIE: As long as we are speaking about education ---

(Laughter and applause.)

-- let's talk about Governor Wallace. I think you fellows have already had one of your answers from these people here, but now let's talk about Governor Wallace and education.

Governor Wallace's Alabama is third from the bottom of the States in educational opportunities. Young men who are tested by the Selective Service System from Alabama, 40 percent of them are rejected for illiteracy and poor health.

The teachers in Alabama are paid \$1600 a year less than the national average. And education is the foundation

1 stone of any free society. And you would turn your children
2 over to a man who in four years as Governor, after four years
3 as Governor, has left his State's education system in miser-
4 able condition, with no opportunity for improvement.

5 Then, let's also talk about your man's record in
6 crime. Here is a man who was running around the country
7 talking about bringing law and order. In his State of
8 Alabama, he has the highest rate of any of the 50 States for
9 murder per population.

10 (Applause.)

11 And this is your law and order man.

12 Your man has only one answer to the ills of this
13 country. His answer -- you asked me to speak, and you are
14 going to hear me out -- his answer is to divide Americans, not
15 to unite them.

16 (Applause.)

17 These people came to this country, their fore-
18 fathers came to this country, as a land of opportunity for
19 all people.

20 (Applause and cheers.)

21 Your man --

22 (Boos.)

23 I know, that is a typical Wallace response. When
24 you haven't got an answer, you make noises.

25 (Applause.)

1 It is time that your candidate and you people began
2 to talk sense instead of making noises at the American
3 people.

4 (Applause.)

5 (Boos.)

6 Yes, that is what you are going to hear from sensi-
7 ble Americans every time you bring that kind of politics into
8 a crowd of freedom-loving Americans.

9 (Applause and some boos.)

10 Well, my friends, back in the countries from which
11 we came, we knew what it was, what it was like, our fore-
12 fathers knew what it was like. They knew what it was like to
13 live in a country in which the Government built walls separ-
14 ating different groups of people. We learned, as we have
15 learned in Berlin, that when you build walls between people
16 you create hatred, distrust, lack of confidence, discrimina-
17 tion, all of the basic human elements which destroy freedom.

18 (Applause.)

19 And the whole creed of their candidate, his whole
20 answer to security and law and order, is to build walls between
21 people, to separate them forcibly, to generate hatred and
22 distrust and lack of confidence. That isn't what my father
23 came to this country to find, and that isn't what we are
24 going to permit to develop in the United States of 1968.

25 (Applause.)

1 We will talk Wallace, and we will let him use his
2 own words, because when the American people focus on what
3 he is really saying, when the American people really appre-
4 ciate the consequences of the kind of philosophy which he is
5 trying to force upon America, they will reject him emphat-
6 ically.

7 (Applause and some boos.)

8 Well, there is no other way to meet this sort of
9 (not clear) to everything we hold dear in America. I didn't
10 grow up to live in that kind of America, and neither did not
11 We want freedom. We want an opportunity to progress. We
12 want an opportunity to improve all our lives, and in the
13 last 30 years, by moving toward greater freedom for more
14 Americans, we have built here in America the best country on
15 earth for the average man and woman.

16 (Applause.)

17 And we are not going to start tearing it down now.

18 Well, I thank you very much. There is nothing
19 like having a little something to stir up your blood at
20 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon. I have got three more
21 speeches to make, and now I have got a little fuel in my
22 tank.

23 (Applause.)

24 Thank you all very much.
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