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Edmund S. Muskie Papers

9-26-1968

Excerpts from Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie at Detroit City Hall

Edmund S. Muskie

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EXCERPTS FROM REMARKS BY
SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE, MODEL CITIES
MEETING, DETROIT CITY HALL, DETROIT,
MICHIGAN, SEPTEMBER 26, 1968, 3:05 P.M.

SEVERAL TIMES DURING THIS CAMPAIGN I HAVE COMMENTED
ON THE PARADOXES OF OUR SOCIETY --

-- THE POVERTY IN THE MIDST OF GENERAL PROSPERITY.
-- THE HUNGER IN THE MIDST OF FOOD SURPLUSES.
-- THE TENSION AND DISORDER IN THE MIDST OF
MATERIAL WELL-BEING.

-- THE POLLUTION AND TRANSPORTATION SNARLS IN
THE MIDST OF TECHNOLOGICAL ACHIEVEMENTS.

NOWHERE ARE THESE PARADOXES MORE APPARENT THAN IN
OUR CENTRAL CITIES.

HERE WE FIND CONCENTRATED MOST OF THE ENERGIES OF
OUR TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

HERE WE FIND THEATERS, MUSEUMS, ENTERTAINMENT CENTERS --
INCLUDING BASEBALL STADIUMS -- UNIVERSITIES AND THE CONTROL
CENTERS OF MIGHTY COMMUNICATION NETWORKS.

BUT HERE ALSO ARE DILAPIDATED HOUSING, CROWDED
STREETS, POLLUTED AIR, OUTMODED SCHOOLS, DECLINING JOB
OPPORTUNITIES AND GROWING TENSIONS.

HERE, IN THE CENTRAL CITIES, TAX BASES ARE DECLINING AND PUBLIC SERVICE DEMANDS ARE RISING.

BETWEEN 1960 AND 1965, FOR EXAMPLE, NON-EDUCATIONAL EXPENDITURES IN THE 37 LARGEST CENTRAL CITIES ROSE TO \$232, PER CAPITA, COMPARED WITH \$132 PER CAPITA IN THE SUBURBAN AREAS.

AT THE SAME TIME, SUBURBS HAVE BEEN GAINING ON THE CENTRAL CITIES IN EXPENDITURES FOR EDUCATION.

IN 1960, THE 37 LARGEST CENTRAL CITIES SPENT \$312 PER PUPIL, COMPARED WITH \$303 IN THE SUBURBS. BY 1965, PER PUPIL EXPENDITURES IN THE SUBURBS JUMPED TO \$574, WHILE CENTRAL CITY EXPENDITURES MOVED UP TO ONLY \$449 PER PUPIL.

IN SHORT, IN THE CITIES, WHERE CHILDREN NEED IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES THE MOST, WE ARE NOT SPENDING ENOUGH.

THE PROBLEMS OF THE CENTRAL CITY ARE NOT LIMITED TO MONEY, HOWEVER.

FOR YEARS WE TRIED TO SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS WITH MASSIVE CAPITAL INVESTMENTS. WE FOUND, HOWEVER, THAT MAGNIFICENT PLANS AND FINE BUILDINGS DO NOT -- BY THEMSELVES -- SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF POVERTY, DISEASE, AND DISTRUST.

WE NEED TO INVEST MORE IN PEOPLE --NOT AS WELFARE RECIPIENTS BUT AS PRODUCTIVE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY.

WE NEED TO REESTABLISH A SENSE OF COMMUNITY -- NOT AS A SEPARATE GHETTO, BUT AS AN AREA WHERE RESIDENTS HAVE A LARGER AND MORE DIRECT SAY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR COMMUNITY.

AND WE NEED TO IMPROVE OUR GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS -- NOT AS SIMPLE MODELS OF EFFICIENCY, BUT AS RESPONSIVE AND RESPONSIBLE PARTNERS IN THE QUEST FOR A BETTER LIFE FOR ALL AMERICANS.

MODEL CITIES IS DESIGNED TO DO ALL THESE THINGS.

IT WILL WORK ONLY IF

(1) CITY OFFICIALS WORK TO ADAPT THEIR OWN GENERATION TO THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE -- RATHER THAN BENDING PEOPLE TO BUREAUCRATIC REQUIREMENTS:

(2) CITY OFFICIALS WORK TO COORDINATE THEIR INTER-DEPARTMENTAL OPERATIONS TO REDUCE RED-TAPE AND IMPROVE THE ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES:

(3) COMMUNITY LEADERS BRING THE RESOURCES OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO BEAR ON THE PROBLEMS OF THE CENTRAL CITY; AND

(4) THE RESIDENTS OF THE MODEL CITY AREA ORGANIZE THEMSELVES TO EXERT A FORCE FOR CONSTRUCTIVE CHANGE, PARTICULARLY THROUGH THE POLITICAL PROCESS.

MODEL CITIES IS AN EXPERIMENT. IT WILL NOT PROVIDE INSTANT OR UNIVERSAL SUCCESS. BUT IT DOES OFFER AS A BASIS FOR NEW APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE CENTRAL CITY --

TO IMPROVE HOUSING, UPGRADE PUBLIC SERVICES, DEVELOP BETTER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF JOBS, AND BUILD A SENSE OF COMMUNITY.

IT IS ROOTED IN THE DEMOCRATIC TRADITION AND DIRECTED TOWARD INCREASED CITIZEN PARTICIPATION. IT OFFERS REAL HOPE TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN BARRED FROM THE PROMISES OF THE CONSTITUTION.

FOR THESE REASONS, YOU HAVE AN ENORMOUS RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE IT WORK.