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Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie to the Federated Democratic Women of Ohio

Edmund S. Muskie

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REMARKS OF THE HONORABLE EDMUND S. MUSKIE
DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE FOR THE VICE PRESIDENCY TO THE UNITED STATES
TO THE FEDERATED DEMOCRATIC WOMEN OF OHIO

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Neil House Motor Hotel
Columbus, Ohio
Saturday, September 28, 1968

I am delighted to be here. I appreciate the warmth of the welcome which you have extended to me at the airport and at the doors of this hotel and in this room.

It reminds me of a story of a Maine cow on a cold frosty Maine morning. The farmer came in to milk her, she turned to him and said, "Thank you for the warm hand."

(Applause)

Years ago, at the end of one of his eloquent speeches, Adlai Stevenson was interrupted by an enthusiastic supporter in the rear of the room, who jumped to his feet and said, "Governor, every thinking man and woman in America will support you." He said, "I'm sorry, that isn't good enough, I need a majority."

(Applause)

Well, now, we are in the process in this campaign of trying to put together a majority. And more than ever before, at least in my lifetime -- and I suspect in the history of our country -- we need a majority that is a thoughtful majority, a majority which is concerned about not only the problems which confront us. I think there is very little difference between people of any of the political parties with respect to concern.

We are all troubled about the war. We are all troubled about unrest in our society, whether it is the unrest of young people looking for a way into it, or the unrest of disadvantaged groups looking for a place in it, or the unrest of those who already have made a place in our society, who are torn by fear of the unknown.

We are all concerned, also, about the deterioration of our environment and the effect that that has upon the spirits of our people and upon the capacity of our resources to meet our needs.

WARD & PAUL

25 K Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002

1 So, as I say, there is no difference between people
2 with respect to concern about these problems. All of the
3 presidential candidates are concerned about them. Two presi-
4 dential candidates who have vice presidential candidates with
5 them are also concerned about them. And everyone is talking
6 about them. Unfortunately, there is too little concern about
7 what are the right answers to these problems.

8 Mr. Nixon apparently has decided that he is so sure
9 of victory that he doesn't need to be very specific about his
10 answers; that all he needs to do is express his concern and
11 that he can rely upon the natural tendency of people who protest
12 to elect him on November 5, without scrutinizing too closely
13 exactly what he would do or exactly what he would propose if
14 he is elected president.

15 Mr. Wallace's approach is that because of the concern
16 and fears of people that all he needs to do is to stir up those
17 fears, to stimulate that concern and to offer them the simplest
18 kinds of answers, to suggest that there is a quick way to the
19 solution of these problems and people will support him.

20 If you will examine what is being said by the candi-
21 dates, if you will read what is being said, listen to that part
22 of it that is carried on national news media, I think the
23 impression will soon grow that there is only one set of candi-
24 dates which is being questioned day by day by the press on the
25 specifics of their positions. Only one set of candidates
26 which is really getting down to specifics on these problems,
27 only one set of candidates, indeed which is being challenged by
28 our people on these problems, and that is the Democratic ticket
29 consisting of Mr. Humphrey and myself.

30 (Applause)

31 Consider Mr. Nixon on the war. Last Spring, if your
32 memory takes you back, you will recall he said he had some ideas
33 about how to achieve peace in Southeast Asia, but he would not
34 discuss them until after the election. And he never did. Then
35 two weeks ago his running mate, always trying to be helpful --

36 (Laughter)

37 -- said they had no peace plan after all.

38 (Laughter)

39 Mr. Nixon has condescended to hold press conference
40 once every eight days, and those are staged with questions

1 screened. He doesn't subject himself day by day as we do to the
2 cross-examining of the press on his stand on Vietnam.

3 Now, what has he said about what he will do on January
4 20 to achieve peace if we have not achieved it by that time?
5 Simply ask yourself the question and try to find the answer in
6 anything that he has said. Then compare that with what we are
7 asked to say, day by day.

8 On law and order, what does he say? I have heard him
9 on television and he purges up gory pictures of all of the con-
10 sequences of crime, and his answer is if you will just change
11 the Party label on the White House that, in and of itself, will
12 solve the problem.

13 It is true that he put out a Position Paper, I think
14 sometime last January or February, detailing some proposals on
15 law and order. But he never talks about those. Instead, day
16 after day, or at least on those days that he deems to speak to
17 the American people, he purges up these gory pictures.

18 Rape has been rape since man was born and we know and
19 protest the consequences of that most violent of crimes, in my
20 judgement. Murder is murder, and we know its consequences and
21 the price that the victims pay. But simply hammering home the
22 conscious consequences of crime doesn't solve the problems.

23 And if you want to look at a Party label, let me
24 suggest something to you. Mr. Nixon points out that from 1960
25 to 1968 there was an 88 percent increase in crime; therefore,
the Democrats in power in Washington are responsible.

He overlooks a couple of things. In the first place,
law and order is a state and local responsibility, and not a
federal. In the second place, from 1960 to 1968, there were
five States that had Republican governors throughout. And in
those five states, crime increased not 88 percent, the national
average, but 170 percent. And during that same period, there
were 18 States that had Democratic governors throughout, and in
those States the increase in crime was not 170 percent, it was
not 88 percent, it was 66 percent.

(Applause)

Let me give you another one. The State of Maine has
the fifth lowest crime rate of all fifty states. The State of
Maryland is at the top of the list of the States in violent crime.

Now, what does that prove?

1 George Wallace's Alabama -- the law and order man who
2 was governor four years and whose wife was governor for two
3 more -- has the highest rate of murder per population of any
4 of the Fifty States.

5 (Applause)

6 Now, I am not suggesting that these statistics prove
7 that crime is a Republican phenomenon, and it certainly isn't a
8 Democratic phenomenon. Crime is the product of the fact that
9 we have not yet found it possible to create a climate in which
10 two hundred million Americans of many different kinds of human
11 beings can live together in harmony, given the unacceptable
12 conditions in which too many of them now live.

13 And we have always known this to be true. As a matter
14 of fact, no society in the entire history of man has ever solved
15 that problem. We thought we had solved it when we began this
16 great experiment in government, by creating a free society in
17 which every member of it had a chance to improve his life. And
18 it worked for 180 years, when we were relatively sparsely popu-
19 lated and before we developed these great concentrations of people
20 into the metropolitan areas of our country, who are crowded into
21 polluted areas, polluted air, polluted water, ghetto conditions,
22 unacceptable housing, lack of job opportunity, discrimination.

23 Now, Thomas Jefferson predicted in these words. He
24 said, "When we begin to pile ourselves upon one another as they
25 do in Europe, we will begin to eat one another as they do in
Europe."

He realized that when we reached this condition, a
condition in which the average citizen feels less significant,
in which the average citizen feels less able to influence the
forces which shape his life, less able to influence the insti-
tutions which set the policies that shape his life, that you are
going to have restlessness and potential disorder and violence.

It has happened in every other society, and it is
happening here, because we are now just reaching that state in
our development. And to pretend that crime is attributable
to Party, that all you have to do is eliminate that Party and
you eliminate crime, is the most patent kind of nonsense that
has ever been proposed to an intelligent American electorate.

(Applause)

The dangerous thing about it all is not that it may
lead to my defeat or Vice President Humphrey's defeat, but it

1 will set in motion an idea about how to deal with the problems
2 of disadvantaged people which will divide our country rather than
unite it.

3 Our country began with a war, a war generated by
4 people who refused to accept taxation without being represented.
5 Is it such an original concept then that people today in our
6 society should be restless because they feel they are not being
7 represented?

8 All of us in this room, I think, are the descendants
9 of people who came to this country from other lands and when
10 they came they found they were not accepted as equals. My
11 father certainly wasn't and I can remember when I was not. So
12 we struggled and fought and worked, and we were helped by
13 democratic programs in the 30's, designed to create opportunity
14 for all people, whoever they were.

15 (Applause)

16 So we have won our fight to become part of the American
17 society.

18 Then in the 30's: Do you remember the struggle of labor
19 to win a fairshare of the fruits of our resources and our
20 industry? Labor's fight to organize, the strikes, the sit-down
21 strikes that sometimes led to violence, often led to disorder,
22 were manifest reflections of unrest and dissatisfaction. We
23 won that fight.

24 So three times at least in our history, beginning
25 with the Revolution, beginning with the onslaught of 40 million
immigrants from overseas, leading to the fight for labor, we
have witnessed the fight of disadvantaged Americans to improve
themselves, fights which they won as a result of which they
became Americans in the full sense, and as a result of which
America has reached the pinnacle as the greatest country for
the common man that ever assembled on the face of the earth.

26 (Applause)

27 So we have grown great by bringing people into the
28 family. We have grown great by uniting different kinds of
29 people. We have grown great by spreading our opportunities
30 so that they would bless everyone in our country.

31 Now, there are those who say to us that isn't the
32 way to do it -- the only way to be safe and secure is to build
33 a wall between those who are nonprivileged and those who are not.

1 But those who have European roots know what walls
2 mean. They mean hatred, they mean distrust, they mean discrim-
3 ination, and they breed unrest and the kind of violence which
4 doesn't escape anyone on either side of the wall.

5 (Applause)

6 Now, we have just one question to decide in this
7 election campaign, as far as I am concerned. I would like to
8 win, of course, and I think that if we were to win we could
9 contribute more constructively to the solution of these problems
10 than any of the other candidates now running.

11 (Applause)

12 But the real decision must be made in the hearts and
13 minds of every American. It is a very simple question: Do we
14 want a divided country or do we want a united country?

15 There is only one way to have a united country, and
16 that is for us to learn to trust each other, even when there
17 is some risk in doing so. Because unless you are willing to
18 take some risks in trusting someone else, he is not going to
19 believe that you trust him.

20 That is true when you are dealing with your kids, as
21 I know -- I have them from 7 to 19 -- and I have tried both
22 ways, and there is only one way that works. And that is to
23 trust them even when you have misgivings as to whether they
24 can meet the responsibility. Trust them enough to make the
25 little mistakes so that they won't make the big ones.

(Applause)

That is the way you have got to deal with other people.
And remember there are some built-in hatreds and distrusts that
you are not going to break down the first time you approach
people. You are going to have to work at it. But, my friends,
doesn't our history tell us what Jefferson promised us, that if
we really build a society in which everybody had some hope,
some hope, that he could improve life for himself and his
children, that in that way and in that way only will we build
safety and security and happiness and peace for our people?

That is the American tradition, that is the American
foundation, that is the American dream. And as far as I am
concerned, it is worth still pursuing this year and for all of
the years to come.

Thank you very much.

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