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Press Conference - Senator Edmund S. Muskie Endorsed by Senators Eagleton and Symington and Governor Hearnes

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Recommended Citation

Muskie, Edmund S.; Hearnes, Warren E.; Symington, William S.; and Eagleton, Thomas F., "Press Conference - Senator Edmund S. Muskie Endorsed by Senators Eagleton and Symington and Governor Hearnes" (1971). *Congressional Records*. 129.

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INFORMAL PRESS CONFERENCE

TRANSCRIPT OF REMARKS

SENATORS EAGLETON, SYMINGTON, MUSKIE: GOVERNOR HEARNES

OCTOBER 7, 1971

The following is a transcription of remarks at an informal press conference following the announcement of Senators Eagleton and Symington, Governor Hearnes of their endorsement of Senator Muskie for the Democratic nomination in 1972.

Senator Muskie: It is a gratifying personal experience to have three good friends, they've all been good friends, to give me this support. I know it is possible to separate friendship from political support - sometimes it is necessary - but in this case it happens to coincide, so that's of special importance to me personally. Politically, it would seem to me to be important that the three top political leaders in a state which is located so strategically from a political point of view should agree on this endorsement. This is mid-America, located between the north and the south, the east and the west; it's a state we barely lost in '68 and it's loss was a key factor, I think, along with two or three other key states in our losing the election. So this has significance for the general election. So this has significance for the general election as well as well - looking ahead that far, if we get that far.

Secondly, I would think that, perhaps, this - with other endorsements what we have had, plus others we anticipate - will contribute considerable political momentum that could be very helpful.

Finally, it is of tremendous help from the fund raising problem, that men of such stature as these three should be willing to commit publicly. It encourages the fund raisers and stimulates the potential contributors.

Question: Do you expect there will be other endorsements in the coming weeks and months?

Muskie: I expect so. Everyone we approach, whether he is a Senator, Congressman, or Governor, of course, has his own problems with respect to timing. But we have been working on this beginning in July - you recall we took July off the trail, and August - and this is one of the things we've been working on in that period, and continue to work at. So we expect that as other political leaders of the Party find it possible to do so, in light of their own political situations, we will begin to get more commitments.

Question: You mentioned fund raising. Does Mr. Salomon come along as part of the package?

Muskie: Well, Mr. Salomon has indicated before this - that he was interested in being of help.

Question: That's Sidney Salomon?

Muskie: Yes, Sidney Salomon.

Eagleton: S-a-l-o-m-o-n, Jr.

Question: You said he has indicated before his interest in being of help?

Muskie: Yes. Yes, I guess I should not be the one saying this for him, but it sort of spilled out of the bag.

Question: Does he hold a party office in Missouri now, Senator?

Eagleton: No. Governor Hearnes succeeded him as national committeeman.

Question: This may have been asked earlier in the press conference but did you make an estimate about how many delegates you will expect to come along for Senator Muskie?

Hearnes: Oh, I'm shooting for 73 out of 73, we're shooting for that. It depends so much on who's in the ballgame when the convention rolls around. (inaudible).. Missouri gave Humphrey 56 1/2 out of 60. I would say that (I don't speak for the Muskie staff) but I would say that they would be pleased with 73 - 60 up would be a good job. 60! Anything below 60 I don't think we've done it.

Question: Other endorsements? Do you expect other Senators and Governors to endorse you?

Muskie: Yes, I do. We know of certain governors who have already endorsed, of course. Rampton, Scott and my own Governor Curtis - so this is four governors who have announced publically - and Governor Leach, yes.

Question: Senator, do you have any plans to visit Missouri in the near future?

Muskie: I'm going to be there . . .

Eagleton: October 15th - Kansas City -

Question: For what kind of occasion?

Muskie: For a fund raiser . . .

Eagleton: Also the public. . . it's an afternoon and evening.

Question: Senator, are you hoping by the time of early primaries that you will be able to show the number of states where you got such support among leadership and can expect such large delegate support at the convention?

Muskie: Well, I think it's important to try to do that, yes. You know, I think that's one of the pressures that (I hate to refer to my own position as a front runner, but since you do, I guess that's the only reference I can make), but that's one of the pressures that the position imposes. It's important to build on that, if possible, and get as strong public posture as possible before the primary season.

This is why this whole period of preparation, of planning and organization is so essential. And in due course, when that's finished as completely as you can, then you announce what you are going to do and go on to the next phase.

And so this is one of the important thing to try to do - to build up momentum in this period that can make an ~~important~~ impact on the primary season.

Question: The governor's estimate is for a good job of 60 delegates. Roughly, what does that give you now?

Muskie: We haven't really done - - this is the first delegate count that I've heard - -

Question: It's 60 then?

Muskie: I guess this is after the fact. Let me say, we haven't really tried to get commitments from people up to this point.

Question: Is this the first commitment that you've had?

Muskie: No, no. I said we haven't solicited commitments we've had up to this point are pretty much offered. My colleagues in the Senate, I know perfectly well, except for those who have offered their support, that the others are still weighing their options, their own situations. So it's just not my style to press them or twist arms. You've got more than a year to go 'til the convention. Now we're reaching the point where we think that we've got to begin to get commitments - to nail them down - - to ask people whether they've made up their minds. But I haven't done it up to now.

With respect to the primary states, we've been analyzing them. In 50 states, we've been taking polls and analyzing delegate possibilities, taking out readings. We don't do everything at once. We've had our problems here - organizing on a national level, setting our directions and our strategy, putting our team together, and now in this phase, we're hoping to get commitments.

There are always those who say we should have done all of this earlier. Well, that's academic now. This is what we are doing now and we hope that we become increasingly effective and efficient at it.

Question: Senator, how long ago did you work out this phase (inaudible) and overall strategy? Was it during the summer period, or August?

Muskie: Well, last spring when some of you fellows were criticising us for not knowing where the hell we were going

(laughter) and rightly so.

Question: Was this a commitment that was solicited or offered?

Muskie: This one sort of grew like Topsy.

Hearnes: I'll tell you this - - all that he had to do was the selection of the timing before I went to Russia. I don't know whether he didn't think I was coming back. (laughter)

There was a question of whether it was before I went to Russia or after I got back. But as for solicitation - - the only decision he had to make was the timing part of it.

Symington: I'd like to say just one thing based on a question at the press conference. As Senator Muskie knows, I've been for him for well over a year and I've told him, and I know Senator Eagleton's been for him for a long time and I know Governor Hearnes has been for him for a long time - - I can remember we were out at Sid Salomon's farm a year ago last July - - Ed -- but this is his (ESM) campaign, not our, and I allowed so that - - that not only is there more talk about him in the Senate, in my opinion, in the cloak rooms it's favorable, and people are saying I think he's ahead, I plan to be for him and so on

All we're doing today - - Governor Hearnes said and I know Senator Eagleton will collaborate -- we've just formalized something that has been on our minds for a long time because we thought from the timing standpoint now would be the proper time to make our position known.

As a Vice Presidential candidate in Missouri in the losing election of 1968, he made a tremendous impression on the people. All you have to do is go out there and talk to the people to find that out. Don't you agree, Tom?

And then you saw what he did election eve, and that hit our state - so there it is.

Muskie: Maine and Missouri had another historic association. Maine was the unpublished half of the Missouri Compromise, but it was part of it. (laughter)

Question: Senator Muskie, in your years as Governor and Senator, did you ever commit yourself to a presidential candidate ten months before the election?

Muskie: In the same way that Stu has described his and Tom's and Warren's interest in me. I had in Jack Kennedy in 1960, this early.

Symington: Which made me pretty sore. (laughter)

Muskie: You remember, Stu, the job I had - - it was a J.-J. Dinner here in Washington. I was toastmaster, and there were eight of these potential candidates, then I had to introduce all eight. And I had to praise all of them without appearing to favor any of them. They all thought I had praised them specially, when I got through - you know, in the wishy-washy Muskie style.

This (inaudible) is so damned early this year, you know. I can't think of

a presidential campaign in my political lifetime, at least, when anybody was making commitments this early. Maybe Abe Lincoln's . . .

Symington: If I may add to that, you've never seen so many candidates this early. It's that kind of horse race. As I said in the press conference, my chief reason for being for him aside from personal affection is that respectfully, I think he is the man who is the most certain to win.

Hearnes: Since this is a b.s. session and Senator Muskie has no place to go . . . people have asked me if there ever was a time when two Senators and a Governor sat down and endorsed at the same time a man for Democratic nominee for President? My experience doesn't go back that far, but I think this is the first time.

Dick Stewart: Despite Governor Hearnes' statement, the Senator does have some place to go.

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