

Muskie Assails Agnew On College Admissions

Sen. Edmund S. Muskie criticized Vice President Agnew's recent attacks on college "open admissions" programs last night, saying the comments had "demonstrated an unfortunate insensitivity to the needs of the deprived."

An open admissions policy "does not guarantee a degree," Muskie said. "It does give students a chance to earn that degree."

In a speech prepared for delivery in Boston, the Maine Democrat urged colleges and universities not to be inhibited by the attacks. He said they "should not fall victim to those who misunderstand their vital role in today's society."

Colleges "must help lead the way in providing a new generation of disadvantaged Americans with the indispensable tool of a quality education," he said.

Muskie's speech was to a fund-raising dinner for Bates College, his alma mater.

Earlier this month, Vice President Agnew called "open admissions" programs a "strange madness" that had been promoted by "supercilious sophisticates."

Agnew said admissions ought to be determined fundamentally on the basis of aptitude. He asked his listeners if they wanted to be treated by a

physician who was admitted to medical school under a quota.

Last night, Muskie said the criticism had misrepresented the operation of "open admissions policies," tending to "ignore the distinction between admissions standards and commencement standards."

Open admissions give "young people from poor backgrounds a chance for higher education," he said, and although racial barriers are dropping at colleges, the barriers that are "harder to crack still stand—the rigid adherence to academic records and academic tests for students whose background and education have not prepared them equally or adequately for college."

Agnew had argued that the same pressures that had led to the new policies would operate to make the students appear "reasonably successful" in their courses.