

Muskie Says Nixon Seeks 1-Man Rule

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By Spencer Rich

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Accusing President Nixon of an attempt at "one-man rule," Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) said last night that the President wants "a blank check" to carry on the war as he pleases, make all budget decisions unilaterally, allocate tax burdens and determine whether the public will ever hear the truth about the Watergate case.

Said Muskie, who was designated by the House and Senate Democratic leadership to respond to last Thursday night's nationwide television speech by President Nixon:

"This notion of one-man rule over the budget, over inflation and over the Watergate case constitutes an abuse of the President's power."

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) and House Speaker Carl Albert (D-Okla.) asked all three major networks to give "live" coverage to Muskie's speech, which was delivered in his office at 9 p.m., on grounds it constituted a congressional reply to presidential TV assertions about the budget and his relations with Congress. However, all three declined, although camera crews were sent to take footage for later use on news broadcasts.

"I'm disappointed, to put it mildly," said Mansfield of the networks' failure to show Muskie on "live" time. Sen. John Pastore (D-R.I.), chairman of the communications subcommittee, which has jurisdiction over the Federal Communications Commission and over network broadcasting, said, "The networks were unwise under the circumstances . . . but it's more a question of policy rather than violation of law."

Pastore said all three networks took the view that "they shouldn't set the precedent of giving equal time every time the President makes a report to the nation." He said

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"categorically" that "this is not a violation" of communication laws, however much he disagreed with their decision.

Democratic spokesmen had told network news executives that it was a distortion to give the President an audience of 100 million for an attack on Congress and then give the Democratic response no "live" time at all.

In his speech, Muskie said the key issue is increasingly the President's attempt to govern without consulting Congress the war, on Watergate and on the budget.

"We in Congress fear, as all Americans fear, the threat of one-man rule. We in Congress distrust, as all Americans distrust any President who would suggest that only he knows what is best for America," said Muskie.

Muskie hit the President particularly hard on his economic policies, saying "the President's attempt to blame

Congress for inflation is unfair and untrue."

The Maine Democrat said, "Since President Nixon ended Phase II price controls in January, food prices, rents and interest rates have all skyrocketed. Wholesale prices went up faster in February than in any month in the last 20 years. The price of food you buy went up at an annual rate of 28 per cent. . . . The President's response (ceiling on meat) comes too little and too late . . . what is the President waiting for? Must all food prices reach intolerable levels before he will act to protect your pocket?"

He said that despite the President's attempt to shift blame to Congress for inflation, it was a fact that Congress favors a budget ceiling and that Mr. Nixon had never submitted a balanced budget in five years in office, had delayed unconscionably before acting against inflation, and had opposed Democrats when they cut his budgets a total of \$20 billion in his first term. to