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Description: Edmund S. Muskie letter to the editor

December 9, 1971

Mr. Robert G. Drake, Editor
Waterville Morning Sentinel
25 Silver Street
Waterville, Maine 04901

Dear Editor:

I have received letters from many residents of the Waterville area, particularly employees of Scott Paper Company, expressing concern over the impact of the 1971 water pollution amendments on their jobs. As I am sure this concern is shared by others, I would like to explain the intent of the proposals adopted by the Senate by a vote of 86 to 0 on November 2.

Clean water and good jobs for Maine people is not an "either/or" proposition. We can, and will, have both.

The intent of the new amendments, which were developed after lengthy and bi-partisan consideration, is to correct weaknesses in the present program and to provide far more money for waste treatment than is now available.

First, the Senate adopted the concept of controlling pollution at the source of discharge in place of the present system of setting over-all water quality standards. Extensive hearings disclosed that the existing water quality program based on standards for receiving wastes has been an ineffective method of pollution control.

The Senate concluded that a system of discharge controls setting standards for the actual sources of pollution would be a more workable and enforceable method for cleaning up the Nation's waters. Second, the Senate also recognized that there are limits – both technical and economic – to our ability to eliminate all discharges of pollutants. Therefore, a two-phase program was adopted

By 1976, all industrial plants not participating in a municipal treatment system must apply the best practicable technology to controlling discharges; by 1981, all sources must apply the best available technology if they can show that the no-discharge goal cannot be achieved. Both phases are based upon the availability of technology and reasonableness of cost.

The 1985 goal for no-discharge of pollutants is a policy objective. It is not an enforceable deadline. Its purpose, which I

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fully support, is to motivate research by establishing a target.

The bill adopted by the Senate is a strong one. Yet I am confident that the Scott Paper Company, based upon its excellent record this far, and other Maine firms can comply with its provisions without jeopardizing the jobs of its employees.

Sincerely,

Edmund S. Muskie
United States Senator

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