

Senator Margaret Chase Smith  
Women's National Press Club  
Speech Announcing Presidential Candidacy  
January 27, 1964

I always enjoy being with the members of the National Women's Press Club -- even when you give members of Congress an unmerciful going over. I think that I enjoy being with you not only because of the many good friends that I have among you but also because I was a newspaperwoman myself before becoming a member of the House and Senate.

Many years ago I worked for the weekly newspaper in my home town -- the Independent Reporter -- in a succession of a variety of jobs ranging from general reporter to circulation manager and some of them concurrently performed as can be done only on a weekly paper. My only claim to fame in that effort was that in its class, while I was circulation manager, the Independent Reporter reached the seventh highest ABC rating of all weekly newspapers in the entire nation.

But it was when I did five columns a week nationally for United Feature Syndicate for more than five years that I felt a greater professional kinship with you. I learned what a chore it was to produce seven hundred words almost daily.

It has been my privilege to address your club more than once. The first time was when I had been a United States Senator for only six days. Five days before I had surprised, if not shocked, some members of the press when I voted for Robert A. Taft for Chairman of the Senate Republican Policy Committee rather than for Henry Cabot Lodge. Some even denounced me as a traitor to the cause of Republican liberalism.

And it was only a year and a half later that others in the press were calling me a traitor to the cause of conservatism because of my Declaration of Conscience made on June 1, 1950. Some even called me pro-Communist on the basis of the Declaration of Conscience.

I have often thought of those instances in which I have been the target of the extremists on both the left and right. I remember how in the 1948 campaign when I first ran for the Senate an anonymous sheet was put out in the primary charging that I voted "the Marcantonio line." It failed. But the same technique was used successfully two years later against Helen Gahagan Douglas.

I remember how in the 1954 campaign I was accused in the primary of being soft on communism and a dangerous liberal -- and then in the general election of being called a reactionary and an all-out effort made by the C.I.O. to defeat me just as COPE did in 1960.

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Library  
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out that I had previously given myself that label when asked a question on the "Meet the Press" program on December 10, 1948.

I have thought frequently of these things in recent months when reading the editorials and articles expressing the opinion that our nation is more rampant with bigotry and hatred than it has ever been. Many conclude that such was the cause of the assassination of President Kennedy -- some even erroneously charging the assassination to racial hatred and bigotry.

In my opinion, any hatred or any bigotry -- even the slightest hatred or bigotry -- is too much for our nation and is to be deplored. But I cannot agree with those who contend that now there is greater hatred and bigotry than ever existed before in our country. Instead I believe that our country is far freer of bigotry and hatred than it was ten years ago -- or at the time of my Declaration of Conscience, when I specifically denounced Fear, Ignorance, Bigotry, and Smear.

Let us examine a few of the contentions that bigotry and hatred are greater now than ever before. First, let us take the first claims and the first news reports on the assassination of President Kennedy. The first headlines were to the effect that President Kennedy had been shot by a Southern extreme racist, by a racial bigot. This was immediately seized upon and exploited by the Russian Communist press for propaganda purposes.

Then after the initial smoke and when heads begin to clear and emotions cool, the truth came out -- and it was not a Southern anti-negro extremist that shot President Kennedy but instead it was a Marxist, a mentally deranged Communist. Further, it was by accident of geography that this mentally deranged Communist was in Dallas, Texas -- when it might have happened in Russia where he lived for some time or in other sections of the United States where he had lived.

No, the assassination of President Kennedy was clearly not what was first represented -- the result of Southern anti-negro extremism but rather the act of a mentally deranged Communist.

Next, let us take the case of the John Birch Society and the Extreme statements that it has issued against American leaders like former President Dwight D. Eisenhower. You might get the impression that never before was there an organization like the John Birch Society making such attacks.

Well, let me explode that myth by pointing out that in the early fifties there was an organization calling itself the Partisan Republicans of California that put out a smear publication charging that I was a leader of a -- and I quote -- "New Deal-Communist plot" to get Dwight D. Eisenhower the Republican nomination for President and to get him elected President.

To those who contend that hatred and bigotry is now greater than it ever was, I would urge a review of the conditions of the early fifties. I would recall to their memories those days of guilt-by-association, of character assassination, of trial-by-accusation. I

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would recall to their memories those days when freedom of speech was so abused by some that it was not exercised by others -- when there were too many mental mutes afraid to speak their minds lest they be politically smeared as "Communist" or "Fascists" by their opponents.

I would recall their memories to a United States Senate that was almost paralyzed by fear -- when some said that when I made the Declaration of Conscience that I had signed my political death warrant -- and when that elder statesman who called one of your members and said that the Declaration of Conscience would have made Margaret Chase Smith the next President if she were a man -- when such elder statesman was so clearly in the minority in his political evaluation of my speech.

Perhaps I know and feel this more strongly than some of those who evaluate and editorialize that bigotry and hatred are at their greatest heights now -- because I felt the whiplash of the hatred and the bigotry from both the extremists of the Right and the extremists of the Left -- when I fought such extremism both on the Floor of the Senate and in the Federal Court -- and Thank God, for common decency, where I won not only in the Senate and in the Court -- but with the people at the polls.

No, there is less bigotry and hate now than there was ten or fifteen years ago -- and we have very impressive proof of this. The late John F. Kennedy helped prove this. After his victory in the 1960 election, who can confidently claim that there has been more bigotry and hatred in the sixties than there was in the fifties? Who can seriously contend that there was more bigotry in 1960 than in 1928?

And who can deny that the rights of negroes are greater in 1964 than they were in 1954? Who can deny that there has been progress on civil rights in the past decade? Perhaps not as much as there should have been. But who can truthfully say that we have gone backwards and become more bigoted in 1964 on civil rights than we were in 1954?

No, I am proud of the progress that our nation and our people have made in the past decade in significantly, encouragingly -- and yes, inspiringly -- reducing hatred and bigotry in our nation and among our people. There is much room for improvement. But there is no need to hang our heads in shame -- there is no need for us to wallow in a deep and heavy national guilt-complex.

For where in the world is there a nation as free of bigotry and hate as the United States? Where in the world is there a nation that has provided "equality in freedom" in the degree that the United States has for its people? Where in the world is there a nation that has done so much to export this concept of "freedom in equality" as has the United States in the billions of dollars that it has poured into efforts to give "equality in freedom" to the other peoples of the world? What other nation has poured out its resources and its heart to practically every other nation in the world in the past twenty-five years besides the United States -- even to Russia with the multi-billion dollar aid in World War II?

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Is such the record of a nation of hatred and bigotry? Is such the record of a nation torn between radicals and reactionaries -- between the Far Right Extremists and the Far Left Extremists?

I think the answers are clear. I think it is abundantly clear that the United States and its people are not hopelessly entwined in bigotry and hatred. To the contrary, I think the record shows that the American people are winning the battle against bigotry and hate -- not losing it. I think the record shows that we have made significant progress in the last fifteen years.

I think it is abundantly clear that we are not a nation of extremists. To the contrary, the extremists of both the Left and the Right are very, very small minorities in size and only seem larger than they really are because they make a greater noise than the quieter non-extremists.

No, the vast majority of Americans are not extremists. They have no use for extremists of either the Far Left or the Far Right. If there be any doubter of the relative freedom of Americans from bigotry and hatred as compared to the other peoples of the world, then let him take a good long look at the Statue of Liberty and particularly those words inscribed at its base of:

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse from your teeming shore. Send these homeless, tempest tossed to me."

For more than a year now I have been receiving a steady flow of mail urging me to run for President of the United States. At first my reaction was that of being pleasantly flattered with such expression of confidence in me. I was pleased but did not take the suggestion seriously for speculation prior to the past year has been limited to vice presidential possibilities.

And so I answered the letters by saying that I was pleased and flattered but that I was realistic enough not to take the suggestion seriously. I was sure that the trend would be short-lived and would end. But instead of fading away, the mail increased and by mid-November of last year reached a new peak.

At that time one of the most persistent writers pressed hard for more than my reply of "I am pleased and flattered but know it could not possibly happen", and in response to his pressing I replied that I would give the suggestion serious consideration and make a decision within a relatively short time. My answer was picked up by the local press and some two weeks later the Associated Press queried my office quoting from the letter and asking if the quote was correct. My office confirmed the quote as being correct and then the mail began to pour in.

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The mail came from all of the fifty states and to my surprise I found that the writers were taking a possible Margaret Chase Smith presidential candidacy more seriously than I had been. Now I try to be serious without taking myself too seriously -- but this mail was not what I had seriously expected. Frankly, it had its effect.

With the tragic assassination of President Kennedy came the political moratorium and the cancellation of the original date of this address. Again I anticipated that during the interim period this mail would fall off. And it did for a few days but then it started up again and now has returned to a level above that prior to the moratorium period.

In fairness to everyone, I concluded that I should make my decision before the end of January -- and I have done so. It has not been an easy decision -- either "yes" or "no" would be difficult. The arguments made to me that I should become a candidate have been gratifying.

First, it has been contended that I should run because I have more national office experience than any of the other announced candidates -- or the unannounced candidates -- with that experience going back to 1940 and predating any of the others.

Second, it has been contended that regardless of what happened to me, should I become a candidate, was not really important -- but that what was really important was that through me for the first time the women of the United States had an opportunity to break the barrier against women being seriously considered for the presidency of the United States -- to destroy any political bigotry against women on this score just as the late John F. Kennedy had broken the political barrier on religion and destroyed once and for all such political bigotry.

This argument contends that I would be pioneering the way for a woman in the future -- to make her more acceptable -- to make the way easier -- for her to be elected President of the United States. Perhaps the point that has impressed me the most on this argument is that women before me pioneered and smoothed the way for me to be the first woman to be elected to both the House and the Senate -- and that I should give back in return that which had been given to me.

Third, it has been contended that I should run in order to give the voters a wider range of choice -- and specifically a choice other than that of Conservative or Liberal -- to give those who considered themselves to be Moderates or Middle-of-the-Road advocates a chance to cast an unqualified vote instead of having to vote Conservative or Liberal. In this contention, it has been argued that this would give the voters a greater opportunity to express their will instead of being so restricted in their choice that many of them would not vote.

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Fourth, it has been contended that I should run because I do not have unlimited financial resources or a tremendous political machine or backing from the party bosses -- but instead have political independence for not having such resources.

There are other reasons that have been advanced but I will not take your time to discuss them. Instead let me turn to the reasons advanced as to why I should not run.

First, there are those who make the contention that no woman should ever dare to aspire to the White House -- and this is a man's world and that it should be kept that way -- and that a woman on the national ticket of a political party would be more of a handicap than a strength.

Second, it is contended that the odds are too heavily against me for even the most remote chance of victory -- and that I should not run in the face of what most observers see as certain and crushing defeat.

Third, it is contended that as a woman I would not have the physical stamina and strength to run -- and that I should not take that much out of me even for what might conceivably be a good cause, even if a losing cause.

Fourth, it is contended that I should not run because obviously I do not have the financial resources to wage the campaign that others have.

Fifth, it is contended that I should not run because I do not have the professional political organization that others have.

Sixth, it is contended that I should not run because to do so would result in necessary absence from Washington while the Senate had roll call votes -- and thus that I would bring to an end my consecutive roll call record which is now at 1,590.

You know of other reasons advanced as to why I should not run -- and so I will not take your time to discuss them.

As gratifying as are the reasons advanced urging me to run, I find the reasons advanced against my running to be far more impelling. For were I to run, It would be under severe limitations with respect to lack of money, lack of organization, and lack of time because of the requirements to be on the job in Washington doing my elected duty instead of abandoning those duties to campaign -- plus the very heavy odds against me.

So because of these very impelling reasons against my running, I have decided that I shall --- enter the New Hampshire Presidential

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preferential primary -- and the Illinois primary. For I accept the reasons advanced against my running as challenges -- challenges which I met before in 1948 when I first ran for United States Senator from Maine, when I did not have the money that my opposition did -- when I did not have the professional party organization that my opposition did -- when it was said that "the Senate is no place for a woman" -- when my physical strength was sapped during the campaign with a broken arm -- when my conservative opponent and my liberal opponent in Maine were not restricted in campaigning by official duties in Washington such as I had -- and when practically no one gave me a chance to win.

My candidacy in the New Hampshire primary will be a test in several ways.

(1) It will be a test of how much support will be given to a candidate without campaign funds and whose expense will be limited to personal and travel expense paid by the candidate.

(2) It will be a test of how much support will be given a candidate without a professional party organization of paid campaign workers but instead composed of non-paid amateur volunteers.

(3) It will be a test of how much support will be given a candidate who refuses to absent herself from the official duties to which she has been elected and whose campaign time in New Hampshire will be limited to those times when the Senate is not in session voting on legislation.

(4) It will be a test of how much support will be given to a candidate who will not purchase political time on television or radio or political advertisements in publications.

(5) It will be a test of how much support will be given a candidate who will campaign on a record rather than on promises.

I welcome the challenges and I look forward to the test.

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