

Lowenstein Book

A unique and exceptional figure in American life, Allard K. Lowenstein was both author and subject of substantial material of high quality and interest. The book envisaged here would collect the best items by and about Lowenstein, including retrospective pieces from the period following his murder in March, 1980. The items would be selected for their interest, range, and merit, and arranged for order and simplicity.

Lowenstein is known primarily as a central mover in most of the major reform movements of our time. He was the founder of the "Dumb Johnson" movement, number seven on Nixon's "Enemies List," a leader of the U.S. civil rights movement, a McCarthy, Brown and Kennedy advisor and an international human rights activist in public and private capacities. One of the finest extemporaneous speakers and debaters in the country, he was also a penetrating analyst of the deeper issues in modern public life. His personal following was enormous and his personality is reflected both in his own writings and remarks and in pieces written about him.

In essence, this book is by Lowenstein himself. His articles, interviews, speeches and testimony would comprise most of its contents, and the best of the material about him often draws heavily on his commentary or quotes. The value of the book is both its focus on a major and seminal public figure and its presentation of a public style and philosophy which set a standard for anyone concerned about contemporary political involvement. The provisional title, from the classic David Halberstam article, is "The Man Who Ran Against Lyndon Johnson."

Contents

The contents of the volume would both reflect Lowenstein's personal activities and perceptions and touch upon the leading issues of recent times. While several of these items received significant attention when they first appeared, no such collection of them has ever been published. Its interest is not only in the individual pieces themselves but in the composite portrait they present of a man and of an era.

Because Lowenstein generally operated at the cutting edge of change, the controversies in which he was involved were often the critical ones of their period. They are seen here through the prism, however, of an unusual personality, a probing and incisive mind, and a galvanizing practical focus. From the relations of the varied items to one another, some sense of a distinctive political profile should emerge.

Among the areas touched on are the civil rights movement, the "Dumb Johnson" movement, political assassinations, congressional reform, the Vietnam War, the campaign process, Nixon and Watergate, youth politics, human rights and governmental oppression, political tactics and reform, domestic abuse of power, major political personalities, diplomatic and foreign policy innovation, environmental priorities, personal philosophy and outlook, and the deeper evolving issues of public affairs and American life. The variety of topics is matched by the diversity in the manner in which they are addressed.

Material written about Lowenstein would take the form of journalistic articles published during his life and of commentaries or appraisals after his death. The material by him would be of several different kinds.

Articles would consist mostly of published items appearing from the early sixties to the last few years. Lowenstein was a painstaking writer, and his work includes magazine and newspaper articles, two cover stories for the Saturday Review, and a piece which won an Overseas Press Club award for "foreign reporting." Speeches would include some campus or other addresses and remarks delivered on the floor of Congress. Testimony would include formal opening statements, but would consist primarily of open exchanges before congressional committees. Interviews would include appearances on programs such as "Meet the Press" or "Firing Line." Some miscellaneous statements or campaign exchanges might also appear.

While the articles and speeches are focused and carefully sculpted, the interviews and testimony may provide the sharpest and most evocative specimens of Lowenstein's personality and thinking. The 1967 "Meet the Press" interview, for example, is a detailed dissection of the basic political realities of the war, developed against the questioning of skeptical newsmen. The 1978 testimony on the U.N. Human Rights Commission is a prescient early overview of the possibilities of U.S. human rights policy, possibilities Lowenstein later came to conclude were not being effectively nursed by the Carter Administration. The 1979 testimony on Zimbabwe, by contrast, is a subtle specific case study of practical implementation in an area in which Lowenstein had been deeply involved. While the administration largely ignored Lowenstein's prescriptions, they defined the basic strategy used by the British in their successful independence negotiations.

The interview on the stolen Brooklyn congressional election in 1972 and the court-ordered rerun provide an intimate depiction of the underside of New York urban machine politics. The Buckley interview on the Robert Kennedy assassination gives a measured and unblinking account of falsehood and cover-up in Los Angeles and of continuing fundamental problems in the official version of that case. In these examples, as in others, a specific issue sheds light on basic aspects of Lowenstein's attitude and approach. They also show him outlining lucidly or presciently the underlying realities of important situations.

One common denominator of all the material is personal conviction and virtuosity of thought and expression. But while Lowenstein's thinking cannot be reduced to capsule formulations, some recurrent themes can at least be suggested. One is the importance of motivation, commitment and psychology in politics, the fact that individuals can make a difference. Another is an anchoring in bedrock values and the determination that political action and advocacy consistently reflect them. A third is a commitment to fundamental social change, coupled with a close sensitivity to both the failures and the possibilities of existing institutions and to the practical means of transforming them. There is also a basic respect for independent thinking and debate, for original viewpoints, and for the logic, when attempted, of democratic process.

Lowenstein had limited regard for many rat slogans and conventional orthodoxies, whether of the status quo or "revolutionary" variety, and his appraisals tended to go beyond them. His statements combine both a concern for the controlling context of issues and an acute practical attention to detail and nuance in strategies for pursuing concrete goals.

Beginning with the fundamental touchstone of basic social concerns, Lowenstein varied not only in the angles and levels at which he addressed issues but also in the capacities in which he did so. He appears in the disparate roles of petitioner, congressman, essayist, organizer, investigator, candidate, diplomat, debator, and organizational leader. The language of public formulations is sometimes more tempered than in some of the point-blank assessments of private discussion. An unblinking fixation on hard realities is combined with adaptiveness in the language with which they are addressed.

Organization

The book will be divided into three separate sections. The first section, "About," would be comprised of material written about Lowenstein during his life, including the Halberstam classic and some major pieces from the New Yorker and elsewhere. The second section, "By," would contain the articles, interviews, speeches and testimony referred to above. Items in both these sections would be presented chronologically, giving some continuity and biographical order to the material. Section three, "Retrospective," would include the best of the articles and statements which appeared following Lowenstein's death.

Some of these entries would need a brief introduction or explanation, possibly footnoted to the title at the beginning of each. A general preface and/or introduction by a well-known figure would also provide some general perspective to the selections which would follow. In addition to these aspects, the book would also contain an index, photographs, and some listing of Lowenstein items not included. A brief chronology of his life might also be appended.

Audience

Writing of Lowenstein, David Broder referred to "the uncounted thousands he enticed, cajoled, badgered and bulldozed into the political life of America," and stated that "it is beyond dispute that he brought more young people into American politics than any other individual of our times." Lowenstein's personal following was deeper and wider than would be plausible to anyone without extensive knowledge of his life and virtually all these people would want this book. The book would also be important to library collections and to material on recent American history. It would have strong appeal, as well, to general readers with an interest in politics or social change and would complement the biographies and film and other projects on Lowenstein currently underway.

(Lowenstein Book - Outline and Possible Items)

"The Man Who Ran Against Lyndon Johnson"

Allard K. Lowenstein and His Times

Introduction

I. About

- "Candidate." New Yorker, 1966.
"The Man Who Ran Against Lyndon Johnson." David Halberstam, Harners, 1968.
"Nassau County; The Kids Against the Crownups," Calvin Trillin, New Yorker, 1968.
"Congressman on the Run." Erwin Knoll, Progressive, 1969.
"New Member." Flora Lewis, New Yorker, 1970.
"Lowenstein Without Glamour." Robert Mayer, Newsday, 1970.
"Lane Duck." New Yorker, 1970.
"Lowenstein Fonders Challenge to Brooklyn's Rooney or Nassau's Wydler." Mary Breasted, New York Times, 1972.
"Murrah." New Yorker, 1972.
"Enemy Number Seven." Judith Coburn, 1973.
"A Liberal Indulgence." William F. Buckley, N.Y. Post, 1978.

II. By

- Excerpt from Brutal Mandate, 1962.
"Death in Mississippi: James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner." Speech, Queens College, 1964.
"Conference of Concerned Democrats." Interview, Meet the Press, 1967.
"Vietnam and the Presidential Election." Interview, Face the Nation, 1968.
"Time-Life Statement." 1969
"An American Flag on the Moon?" Congressional Speech, 1969.
"Student Activism in America." Class Day Address, Harvard University, 1969.
"Direct Election of the President." Congressional Speech, 1969.
"Tyranny in Wenceslaus Square." Newsday, 1969.
"The Vietnam Moratorium." Interview, Evans-Novak Report, 1969.
"Challenge to Nixon Administration and Offer to Resign Congressional Seat." Speech, 1970.
"Subsidizing Oppression in Spain." Congressional Speech, 1970.
"Mr. Hoover and the FBI." Congressional Speech, 1970.
"Strict Constructionism and the War." Congressional Speech, 1970.
"Politics, the War, and the Presidential Election." Interview, Meet the Press, 1971.
"Memo to the ADA." ADA World, 1971.

selection
from

- "Letter to the American Right." 1971.
- "For As Long As it Takes." Toothing Stones, 1972.
- "Running Against the Brooklyn Machine." Interview, 1973.
- "Congressional Reform and Academic Scholarship." Party and Opposition, 1973.
- "Watergate." ADA World, 1973.
- "Reflections on a Third Force." ADA World, 1973.
- "Statement With Paul Schrader on the Assassination of Robert F. Kennedy." 1974.
- "No Monopoly on Jewish Defense." Newsday, 1975.
- "Who Killed Bobby?" Interview, Firing Line, 1975.
- "A Cynic's County Legislature." Newsday, 1975.
- "Who Voted for the Concorde?" Newsday, 1975.
- "Spain Without Franco." Saturday Review, 1976.
- "Introduction of Governor Jerry Brown." Interview Magazine, 1976.
- "Politics and the Marine Environment." Testimony, House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, 1976.
- "Fifth Congressional District Campaign." Interview, Hofstra Law Journal, 1976.
- "Suppressed Evidence of More Than Assassin?" Saturday Review, 1977.
- "Review of the United Nations 33d Commission on Human Rights." Testimony, House Subcommittee on International Organizations. 1977.
- "Eleanor Roosevelt." 1977.
- "One-ness Earth." Speech, U.N. Holiday Service, 1977.
- "The Future of Human Rights in American Foreign Policy." Speech, Friedmann Conference, Columbia University, 1978.
- "South Africa Must Change or Stand Alone." Interview, Johannesburg, 1978.
- "Anniversary of An Assassination." Washington Star, 1978.
- "Why I Quit." New York Post, 1978.
- "The Environment and New York City Transportation." Testimony, State Environmental Protection Hearings, 1978.
- "Congressional Anti-Gerrymandering Legislation." Testimony, Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, 1979.
- "Transition to Majority Rule in Zimbabwe." Testimony, House International Affairs Committee, 1979.
- "Carter and Kennedy in 1980." Interview, David Susskind Show, 1979.
- "Robert F. Kennedy and the Nature of Power in America." 1980.

selection
from

III. Retrospective

- "Another Night, Another Room... and Death," Jimmy Breslin, New York Daily News, 1980.
- "An Old Friend Mourns a Special Loss." James Weschler, New York Post, 1980.
- "Remembering a Man Who Mattered Through the Years," Richard Cohen, Washington Post, 1980.
- "Address to the New York State Federation of Teachers," Senator Edward Kennedy, 1980.

Eulogy - New York Memorial Service, William F. Buckley, Jr.
Eulogy - New York Memorial Service, Rep. Paul N. McCloskey.
"A Chance Encounter." Thomas Powers, Commonweal, 1980.
"Notes and Comment." New Yorker, 1980.

Photographs and Drawings (middle of book)

Chronology

Selected References

Index

Sample Items

About

1. "Candidate" (New Yorker, 1966)
2. "The Man Who Ran Against Lyndon Johnson" (Halberstam, Harpers, 1968)

By

3. "The Conference of Concerned Democrats" (Meet the Press Interview, 1967)
4. "An American Flag on the Moon?" (Congressional Speech, 1969)
5. "For As Long As it Takes" (Toothing Stones, 1972)
6. "No Monocly on Jewish Defense" (Newsday, 1975)
7. "Suppressed Evidence of More Than One Assassin?" (Saturday Review, 1977)
8. "Review of U.N. Commission on Human Rights" (House Testimony, 1977)

Retrospective

9. "Another Night, Another Room... and Death" (Breslin, N.Y. Daily News, 1980)
10. "Notes and Comment" (New Yorker, 1980)