Parade 3/2/69

SKY-HIGH LEGAL FEES When Ramsey Clark, Lyndon Johnson's Attorney General, decided to prosecute pediatrician Dr. Benjamin Spock, Yale University chaplain William Coffin, and three other educators on grounds of conspiracy to violate the draft law, he may have assured the financial bankruptcy of one or more of the defendants.

Legal fees are truly towering these days. It will cost Spock and Coffin at least $100,000 each to carry their cases to the U.S. Supreme Court if they need to.

Dr. Spock may have that sort of money -- he's made a fortune in royalties from his baby care book -- but Coffin and the other defendants do not.

Even though former Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg is defending Coffin at no charge, Coffin's legal fees and court costs have already mounted to $50,000. The faculty at Yale University has contributed $26,000 to his defense and another $10,000 has been raised at a function at the Boston home of poet Robert Lowell, but Coffin still needs another $65,000.

The National Council of Churches, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N.Y., an organization to which tax-deductible contributions may be sent, has started a Coffin defense fund to help the former World War II and Korean War hero, but to date contributions have been sparse and slow.

In all fairness to Lyndon Johnson, it is now well known that he had nothing to do with the decision to prosecute Spock, Coffin, and the others. That decision was Ramsey Clark's and Clark's alone. One hour and 15 minutes before he decided on his course, Clark sent word to George Christian, White House press secretary, on what he was about to do.

In the 1950's, when Clark was a U.S. Marine, he was assigned the dream job of the corps. He traveled from one world capital to another, Paris, London, Vienna, carrying diplomatic messages between Washington and the various U.S. embassies. He is the son, of course, of former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark, who retired so that son might become Ole Lyndon's Attorney General.