

# Jim Klobuchar



THE SHABBIEST PERFORMANCE of the Administration orators Tuesday was the recruitment of America's war dead to hang the label of un-American on those who dissent on Vietnam.

The new Spiro Agnew style, having been run up the polls and found acceptable by the doorbell surveys, is now in fashion. It taunts, baits, intimidates. The words "Communist," and "dupe" and "mob" are now casually spread around to cover not only the hooligans but those who truly believe we are wrong in Vietnam.

In their understandable search for unity, the Nixonites seem to be demanding conformity. It is as though the test for the citizen's regard for his country and his gratitude for its bounty is to pick up a telephone in the middle of the night and call Dr. George Gallup with a fresh testament to Richard Nixon's wisdom.

It was not the passionate defense of the Nixon policy or even the echoes of a nostalgic militarism that were disturbing Tuesday but rather the shrill, bullying assaults on Americans who disagree.

I doubt that most of us believe the war reasonably can be ended in less than a year. The decisions pressing on Mr. Nixon are staggering in their weight and implications. He can be pardoned for using the ad agency stunts — rolls of carefully inspired telegrams and poll manipulation — to marshal support for his policies and to persuade the North Vietnamese that we do have a will to stay if necessary.

But in the process you do not have to perform a political castration on the hundreds of thousands who want to stand in the street to witness their dissent.

As a personal matter, I prefer not to stand with them. I say this because I am not quite clear on where their own purposes differ substantially from the stated ones of the Nixon administration. The protest movement, by and large, already has succeeded. It has moved Mr. Nixon to a point where he says he has a plan to end it, presumably within a year or two and certainly before his 1972 campaign, by pulling out the American troops.

This may not be history's noblest solution, but it appears to be the only one acceptable to the nation, and clearly it is the most civilized solution.

NO MATTER HOW IT STINGS our pride or frustrates us with the hindsight of the might-have-beens, it is going to be written as a military defeat. So be it. Comforting, face-saving language will be available to deny it when it happens.

With the critical decisions nearing down this road,

Mr. Nixon had to go before the public for ratification of what he must do. Mr. Gallup says this was forthcoming on the scale of 77 percent. If there was any doubt, Mr. Nixon had an avalanche of telegrams. Some of these represented the sounds of a previously silent America. Others came from Nixon precinct workers, which, under today's political ground rules, is okay.

But what honor is there for the American war dead when you lie about some of the things they died for? Is it any desecration of their memory or an affront to the nation's essential goodness and greatness to observe the simple truth that some of them did not have to die that way?

**"We Americans," postures the senator from Texas, John G. Tower, "don't start wars. We finish them."**

This may inflame the crowd and congratulate us on our historic mission, but it does small service to truth. For rebuttal we may interrogate the Filipinos, the Mexicans, the Spaniards on Cuba.

We may interrogate the American Indians, whose ancestors were slaughtered and brutalized in the steady progress of civilization. The acknowledgement of this does not make this country's national strivings any more villainous than those of others. But it does remind us of the ease with which the telling of history—and the invocation of patriotism—can be casually perverted.

**THE ONES WHO STILL CONTEND** we can settle it sooner are now under a determined revilement that would do credit to the witch hunting of the 1950s. With justification we can be angered by the provocateurs who will try to turn the moratorium into an indictment of the nation. But we might also remember that the non-violent who will outnumber them were the ones responsible for breathing some sanity into a maddening war in the first place.

Yes, their voices have bothered us, our consciences. We heard the same kind of voices 10 years ago in the streets of Alabama, and it bothered us then. There are times when we simply want them to be quiet, so that we may all belong to the silent majority.

But if we now allow a pol occupying the country's second highest office to set the tone for the national debate, and we invoke the memory of the war dead to smother the dissent, what, we should ask, was it all for?

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