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PAGE A22

No

The effort by this administration to characterize the weekend demonstration as (a) small, (b) violent, and (3) treacherous will not succeed because it is demonstrably untrue. If citizens had had the opportunity to witness the weekend on television, they would know it to be untrue; as it is, they will have to ask those who were there—either kids or cops, no matter. For sheer balderdash it would be difficult to exceed Herbert G. Klein's estimate: "Had it not been for the highly effective work of the Washington police, of the National Guard . . . for the reserve forces of the Defense Department and the complete cooperation of all elements of the government . . . and the work of the Justice Department . . . the damage to Washington (Saturday night and the night before) would have been far greater than . . . the . . . riots after the death of Martin Luther King."

That statement is inaccurate on every count save the first—the enormously effective and professional performance of the Washington police department. Not necessarily in order of importance, thanks should be tendered to (a) the marchers, (b) the volunteer marshals, (c) the police and Chief Wilson, (d) the Mobe leaders, (e) Mayor Washington, and (f) the scores of organizations, churches and others, and individuals who went out of their way to exhibit what the mayor called "neighborliness."

What this administration, and the Attorney General in particular, does not seem capable of grasping is the simple truth that if the demonstrators had wanted serious violence they had the numbers to create it. Does anyone seriously believe that Washington's undermanned police force could contain 5,000 or 50,000 or 150,000 demonstrators bent on violence? The answer is No, and the demonstrators didn't want trouble. The fringe groups—Weatherman, crazies—did want trouble, and got it. To the Attorney General, this is evidence that the Mobe lost control and broke its nonviolent pledges. Is it reasonable to hold the Mobe leaders (and, by implication, all those thousands who marched) responsible for the actions of 50 or 200 or 500 people? No, it is not. The Mobe does not control Weatherman—and that is not an apology,

it is a fact. There is evidence now that Weatherman demanded \$20,000 from the Mobe as the price for peace; the Mobe refused, and the wild ones marched on the Saigon embassy. What there is now is a split between the antiwar moderates and the extremists; it is a serious split, but if John Mitchell tries hard enough he can probably heal it. He is one of the few men in the country who can.

"I do not believe that—over-all—the gathering here can be characterized as peaceful," was the way the Attorney General put it. He places in evidence the fact that at the "major confrontation" at Dupont Circle "20 persons were arrested." If the arrest of 20 people then, less than 300 people overall out of a crowd of a quarter of a million, constitutes a "major confrontation" engineered by the leaders of that crowd—then, what we may have here is a failure of communication.

These men—Mitchell, Klein and others who have had a hand in making policy in this matter—are not dumb or weak but small, men who somehow naturally see themselves as beleaguered adversaries. It seems clear from their statements, and from the accounts of participants at the command post in the District Building over the weekend, that the Nixon administration was less interested in trying to keep the march peaceful than in trying to make it seem less large and more violent than it really was, and in trying to scare the daylighters out of that putative Silent Majority at the same time.

So yesterday, as is the fashion with this administration, we had the qualifying statement from the White House press secretary, Ron Ziegler. Yes, it was a pretty large crowd; yes, it was, when you think about it, fairly peaceful. More moderate, more generous, more truthful than the other statements—but there is no reason to think that what Ziegler says is what the President thinks. On Saturday and Sunday, the President by his own account was preoccupied with the football games. It was a fine afternoon for watching football, he is quoted as saying on Saturday, and for sheer piquancy, we have not heard the likes of that since Marie Antoinette.

“Speaking For The Great Silent Majority — ”

