

George F. Will

Post  
10/26/74

## Clark vs. Javits: Battle of Left Jabs

NEW YORK—Ramsey Clark is a triumph of contemporary American fiction. A Texan who transplanted himself in Manhattan, he seems to have sprung full-blown from the brow of Truman Capote, who created the archetype, the hillbilly who left Tulip, Texas, as Lulamae Barnes and arrived in Manhattan as Holly Golightly, the piquant playgirl of "Breakfast at Tiffany's."

Like Holly Golightly, Clark fled a past that confined and embarrassed him. (He was Lyndon Johnson's faithful servant, the Attorney General who prosecuted baby doctor Spock for antiwar conspiring.) Holly Golightly lodged in an upper eastside brownstone; Clark goes her one better, lodging in Greenwich Village. He, like she, has redecorated himself, inside and out.

Someone—Capote, perhaps—said Holly Golightly was a phony, but a real phony, meaning that the self she created for herself was her real self; it just could not be born in Tulip, Texas. Similarly, Clark, 46, the former establishment lawyer who now is shuffling to a different flutist, is an artifact, but not artificial.

A self-creation, he is a phony, but a real phony—a work of art. And having risen on the stepping stone of his dead self to what he considers higher things, he now wants to rise to the U.S. Senate, where a real phony would be an improvement.

Clark's intellect is an invitation to circular reasoning. It is true that if an

idea is liberal, he will accept it. But no idea can safely be called liberal until he accepts it. He is the new Pope of that persuasion.

He thinks President Ford's amnesty program is harsh. He likes forced busing to achieve integration. He thinks maybe the New York City subway should be "free" (that is, people in Tulsa and Omaha and elsewhere should pay for it through federal subsidies, even more than they already are paying). He seems to think that a business making a profit is vulgar. But he wants to tax business profits to finance new social programs.

Today he is wearing Hush Puppies (but not "earth shoes"—he's out of uniform), argyle socks, gray denim wash pants, a suit jacket of a discordant shade of gray, a white button-down shirt, and a dollar tie no more than two inches wide. It isn't clothing; it is a costume.

It is post-Watergate haberdashery—part of the antipose pose, a sincerity gambit from Robert Hall. It is the carefully calibrated "uncalculated" look for politicians cunningly convinced that dishevelment serves the symbolism of candor. This may be Nixon's unwitting revenge on American sophisticates—politicians wearing argyle socks, to create the image of people who disdain image.

Clark's opponent, Sen. Jacob Javits, 70, is seeking a fourth term. But Javits is bewildered by the experience of being flanked on the left, and flanked by someone at least as sanctimonious as himself.

Clark, radiating righteousness from every fiber of his humble self, has focused attention on his refusal to accept contributions of more than \$100. Javits, who receives large contributions, has become defensive about them, arguing, in effect, "I'm not a crook." (Javits' campaign slogan is: "He's One in a Hundred." True.)

Javits, having flown to Castro's police state to prove that his liberalism is impeccable, now is in Manhattan denouncing Clark's 1972 trip to Hanoi, where Clark announced that U.S. prisoners of war in North Vietnam were healthier than he was. (Clark was more accurate than he meant to be.)

Clark is in a telephone booth along Queens Boulevard, shouting above the roar of traffic, so a telephone-loud-speaker hookup at an upstate college can carry his message to a rock concert audience. And a Clark staffer is confiding to me, as every politician's staffers confide to every writer, that the candidate is "really" an "intensely" private, even shy, man. Now private, shy Clark is back in his Dodge bus, careening through Queens, in search of the public.

Clark and Javits, like most politicians who don't disagree fundamentally, say that if the other is elected there will be drought, famine, pestilence, and the death of first born followed by litigation upon inheritances—yea, verily, cry "Havoc!" and let slip the dogs of higher subway fares. Clark and Javits are equally correct.