

# Ramsey Clark Still Battling for

By REM RIEDER

Bulletin Washington Bureau

Washington — It was supposed to be a hearing of the Senate Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity. But at times it sounded more like a love-in.

"I don't think we've ever had an attorney general who fought harder for civil rights and civil liberties than you did," Sen. Walter F. Mondale (D-Minn), committee chairman, told the witness, Ramsey Clark.

A few minutes later Sen. Jennings Randolph (D-W Va) thanked Clark for his frequent visits to West Virginia. And Sen. Edward W. Brooke (R-Mass) made it bipartisan by telling Clark, "The nation is very fortunate that you have continued with your interests since you have been out of office. You have made a rich contribution."

## Young Audience

The large hearing room had a standing-room-only crowd, made up mostly of young people. "Isn't this exciting?" One dazzling brunette asked her friend. Later the throng interrupted Clark with applause.

Ramsey Clark served as U.S. Attorney General during the last two years of the Johnson Administration. That was the culmination of eight years in the Justice Department.

Eighteen months ago Lyndon Johnson left the White House and Clark was replaced at Justice by a vastly different man, a municipal bond expert named John N. Mitchell.

## Teaches at Howard

Since that time Clark has been busy. He is practicing law with the Washington office of Paul, Weiss, Goldberg, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, a prestigious New York law firm. He teaches a course at Howard University Law School. He wrote a book called "Crime in America," which will be published this fall.

And he spends an immense amount of time giving lectures throughout the country and testifying before a seemingly-endless number of con-



"We have to learn to live together."  
—Ramsey Clark

# Civil Liberties

gressional committees.

Ramsey Clark is a scathing critic of the Nixon Administration crime program, particularly in his opposition to preventive detention and wire tapping and no-knock entry for police. He has a crusader's zeal for school integration. And he is an outspoken dove on the subject of Southeast Asia.

As a result, a Ramsey Clark cult has emerged recently among many liberals, young people and blacks. (This despite the fact that it was Clark who sought the indictments of Dr. Benjamin Spock, the Rev. William Sloane Coffin and three other men for conspiring to violate the Selective Service act.)

### Target of Nixon

Of course, Ramsey Clark would not make everybody's starting five. He was repeatedly attacked by Richard M. Nixon in the 1968 Presidential race to the point that he virtually became a campaign issue. Those who believe in a hard-line, law-and-order approach to crime control have little sympathy with Clark's views on law enforcement. And vice-versa.

The subject of all this adulation and invective is a tall (6-4), lanky Texan with the

accent and manner of a "big ole country boy." There is more than a touch of the perpetual innocent in Clark's style: Gomer Pyle in the big city or, more aptly, Jimmy Stewart in "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington."

He is soft-spoken, low-key, thoughtful, earnest. A Southern Ramsey Clark-watcher notes, "He reminds me of a serious young Baptist deacon."

### Committed

In some ways the appearance is deceiving. Behind it lurks a deeply-committed man who is aware of what is going on in this country and the world, and damned upset about it.

"I worry about repression," Clark said the other day during a long interview in his Washington law office. "I think it has always been ignoble, but it is extremely dangerous in our time. You see a repressive tenor in much of what the Administration says and does. They want to make dissent socially unacceptable and politically impossible, perhaps."

Clark believes that the law is not just a harsh, rigid set of rules. To him it is much more than that.

### Moral Impact

"I feel that the law must exert moral leadership, or it will never gain the respect of the public. When the law acts unjustly, or when it is dehumanizing — whether through preventive detention or wiretapping or the death penalty — then it corrupts its opportunity for fulfillment.

"We have to get rid of crime's underlying causes. You can't control crime by force, except in a very limited way. In the long run, violence, and that includes police violence, will beget more violence."

One law which would be useful, Clark says, is a stronger piece of gun control legislation. The failure of the Nixon Administration to take a position on it shows its tough anti-crime talk is "political posturing," he feels.

### Law Not Omnipotent

Ultimately, criminal justice has a limited role to play in

solving the crime problem, according to Clark.

"The law is not that powerful a force when you get right down to it," he said. "Look at crime, look at school desegregation."

A hint of a grin flickers across his face.

"Look at the Ten Commandments."

Clark is a member of an independent commission investigating police treatment of Black Panthers, and he will not discuss the charge that his successor is leading a "conspiracy" against the militant group. But he thinks we must face the fact that police brutality in the ghetto is a serious problem.

"The relationship between our police and our black citizens throughout our history has not been a happy one," he said. "We must realize that in a free society, the police have to serve the people, not suppress them . . . it is absolutely unacceptable for a government of laws to permit those acting on behalf of the law to violate the rights of

The Evening Bulletin

# FOCUS

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE PEOPLE...  
THE IDEAS... THE VIEWS  
BEHIND TODAY'S NEWS

B FRIDAY, JULY 10, 1970 3

citizens. Nothing is more likely to impair the effectiveness of the police than unfair police action."

### **Integration Drive**

In his appearance before the Senate committee this week, Clark renewed his call for increased federal pressure for total school integration, both in the North and South.

[It was under Clark that the first suits were filed against segregated Northern districts.]

And it is on this subject — the reconciliation of white and black — that Clark's cool, thoughtful style of expression gives way to fervent hope.

"We have to learn to live together," he said. "If we just wake up, we would realize that integration is a vitalizing, enriching, and highly desirable experience."

Clark said he thoroughly enjoyed teaching "Law as an Effective Instrument of Social Change" at Howard Law School. It was his first teaching experience.

### **'Great Need'**

"I just loved it," he said. "I feel a very great need to try to understand and communicate with young people, particularly young blacks."

Of his first year at Howard — he will return next fall — he says, "There were great young people, great issues and, heaven knows, great problems."

There is a large irony in the fact that Clark, a vehement opponent of the war in Vietnam, served as attorney general under Lyndon Johnson, the man who escalated it. Clark is not sure he can justify his position.

"I've never been able to adequately analyze myself on that," he said. "I guess in the main, I tried not to think about it. I tried to think I was engaged in very important work, that I had an opportunity to do good and that I would lose that opportunity if I quit.

"But whenever I heard the body count, it made me sick."

### **'Cherish Life'**

At times Clark sounds like a pacifist.

"We better learn to cherish life, not just American life and our boys. They are good boys, but so are the Vietnamese boys."

At 42, with broad legal experience, a national reputation and a large number of admirers, Ramsey Clark has quite a future in front of him.

But when questioned about it, his usually open manner changes, and becomes evasive. In a recent interview he would not say whether he plans to run for President eventually, at the same time refusing to rule it out.

When told he has been mentioned as a natural for the U.S. Supreme Court — his father Tom C. served on it for 18 years — he at first showed disinterest — "It's a big country, and one member of my family already served on that court."

### **Problems Ahead**

What then?

"I see a need to play an active role until some of the problems that concern me are overcome," he said.

"Unfortunately, I don't see that happening in the near future," he smiles. "I say unfortunately, because I can enjoy life immensely without being very active."

At Justice, Ramsey Clark used to have a plaque in his office. The plaque contained a Spanish motto which, translated loosely, reads, "How pretty it is to do nothing, and after doing nothing, to rest."

"I'd love to play tennis a few hours a day with my 16-year-old son," he said. "I'd love to read a book or two, listen to a symphony, have one carefully-prepared meal a day, watch pretty girls."

"I enjoy all these things, but I haven't had enough time to do them the past 10 years."