

MARK LANE : I AM A CANDIDATE

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It may be said that I am on a winning streak, politically speaking. In 1960 I ran for the New York State Legislature and was elected. Now I am a candidate for Vice President. Or what, you ask? Vice President of the United States, Dick Gregory and I met last week in a telephone booth in Chicago, flipped a coin and he lost. He is the candidate for President of the United States.

Dick has already requested that he be briefed on the great issues by President Johnson, presumably so that he can be as confused as the administration. Johnson, willing to brief Alabama's illustrious statesman, George Wallace, and a sure winner, Harold Stassen, has declined to meet with Dick. Of course Lyndon comes from the South and might be reluctant for an exchange with a Nigra who doesn't work for him on the ranch in Texas or the other one in Washington. In order to bring about some reconciliation in our divided country I have offered to meet with the President on Dick's behalf.

About that winning streak. I must confess that I once sought the nomination of the Reform Movement in New York in order to run in the primary for the Democratic nomination for Congress in 1962. While the public never was permitted to vote, the reformers did, and I was not chosen. It was said that my position on Viet Nam, back in 1961, was proof that I "did not understand the nature of the Communist menace." My position? Seven years ago I called for the withdrawal of all American troops. At that time the liberals did not consider Viet Nam to be a moral issue; their sons were not being drafted and killed them. A few thousand farmers, their wives and children were dying, but they were Asians and very far away.

I had hoped that Sen. Eugene McCarthy would receive the Democratic nomination. In fact I made a few speeches for him and a relatively small financial contribution to his campaign. I supported him primarily because he was a decent man and therefore the lone exception on the regular political horizon this year. I sup-

ported him without any real expectation that he might be chosen when the party bosses convened in Chicago. I supported him amused by the knowledge that some of his supporters and most of those closest to him, including young Allard Lowenstein not long ago favored the war in Viet Nam. Nothing succeeds like success and nothing is more unpopular to Americans than a losing war.

But McCarthy is no longer a candidate. The voice of the people, so clearly expressed during the primaries and on the streets of Chicago, has been tragically ignored. The country requires an alternative, if only so that some future war crimes trial some Americans can state that they voted against the monolith that merely insisted upon domination

of the world.

In truth, I was at home in gentle New Orleans when a young lady living in Philadelphia called to ask if I would run on Greg's ticket in Pennsylvania where he is already on the ballot. I agreed primarily because he is so brave and committed a man and such a good friend.

A couple of days later Greg called to ask if I would run with him in other states where he expected to be on the ballot, my old home town, New York for one, and nationwide as a write-in candidate. Of course I said yes viewing it all not exactly as a lark but without any real hope of shaking the system as a Vice Presidential candidate. I went to Chicago to work out a platform with my running mate, lived on the streets with the young people for fifteen hours a day, for three days, was gassed four times by the National Guard and Chicago police and clubbed twice by the police.

I am a candidate. No one under thirty five is eligible to run for national office and so Greg and I stand in loco parentis. I would prefer to support some bearded youth and some pretty young thing for the ticket but the law will, at present, not allow it. So we are your candidates if you will have us. In some states another oppo-

sition candidate may appear on the ballot. Eldridge Cleaver may win his fight in the court (he is under 35) and be permitted a place on the ballot. He is a talented and incisive writer and I should not at all be displeased if you voted for him instead.

For me, I am going to write in the name Dick Gregory. I saw him speak to the young people in Chicago. He read the Declaration of Independence to them. When was the last time you heard it? He spoke of the meaning of law and order in a city run by the syndicate. Two days later, when all marches were banned by the gas-tapo tactics of the soldiers and police, Greg invited a few friends, the 3,000 present in Grant Park, to walk home with him. When he was stopped by a National Guard General he pushed ahead and went to jail for trying. Murray Kemp-ton, rarely involved, took off his delegate's badge, his cloak of immunity, and went to jail with Greg.

Representative democracy ended in America on a November day in Dallas. An effort to restore it died in Chicago almost five years later when fascism, in

its most obvious form, came to America.

We had to wait almost five years for the storm troopers to take to the streets simply because they were not required earlier. Had McCarthy been nominated the American people would have had it within their power to dismantle the war machine. Not for nothing was John Kennedy killed, and not without a fight, no matter how much it revealed about the nature of the beast, could a path back to sanity be permitted to the American people.

Very likely the debacle of Chicago cost the Democrats the chance of winning the election. But the awful power that controls this country and the Democratic convention would rather lose with Humphrey than win with McCarthy. For McCarthy's victory would be their defeat while Nixon's victory is theirs as well.

Let all Americans ponder that

which took place in Chicago. Let mothers and fathers who long ago lost contact with their children know that their children, far braver than they, were gassed and clubbed for believing that there is an American constitution which refers to the right to assemble and the right to speak. Let the young men and women who were not there remember that others their age were. What are you doing in Chicago, they might ask. Let "Thoreau's children" answer, "What are you doing out there."

What can you do. You have perhaps one chance. Perhaps not even that. In the hope that you have, speak up now. Of course, liberals will warn us that we may, inadvertently, be responsible for Nixon's election.

I cannot be frightened by the spectre of Nixon for we have been forced to live with the reality of Johnson and Humphrey too long. No doubt, discerning liberals could detect a distinction between the candidates if Hermann Wilhelm Goering were to run against Joseph Paul Goebbels. No two men are exactly alike, and from that truism we may take some solace as we consider the last years under Johnson. Yet their policies may be insufficiently dissimilar to cause decent men to be repulsed. Humphrey stands for war abroad, and at home, brutality in confronting the young

people of this country when they wish to be heard. I do not know what it is Nixon stands for but it appears to be neither better nor could it be worse.

If there is any salvation for this nation it is through the direct involvement of those who have been excluded from the controlled parties. Ambitious young men, Lowenstein as one example, will continue to seek their fortune through the regular channels, and fortune and fame may yet be found there for the diligent. The hope of the nation, however, lies elsewhere.
