

5/10/94

Dear Jerry,

I've read Chafe on Lowenstien through his dump Johnson exploit.

I think Chafe should have explored how brilliant that really was. Not in terms of pulling it off but in terms of what it meant and what the alternatives could have been.

From all Al knew no Kennedy was going to make the race. He had no reason to believe that McCarthy could win. So, who was and what would it have meant if the GOPs won after his campaign? And did and I think ^{will} not explored in Al's thinking.

If Johnson had changed his ^{mind} ~~word~~ and run ~~and XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ or if Humphrey ^{won} ~~had~~ ^{that} ~~would~~ have been any worse on the war than Nixon et al? There is no way of knowing but I think it possible ~~HHH~~ might have ended the war when Nixon did not and that with the kind of reverses LBJ might have considered that if he had not bowed out.

I'd not thought of this earlier.

Chafe does not indicate that Al gave it any thought at all.

Of course the RFK assassination changed it but as of the beginning of Al's campaign he had every reason to believe that no Kennedy would run. ^{than} So he could not have figured that either Kennedy would ~~be~~ president.

Then there are the consequences of the GOPs coming it and the radical changes under them.

It would not have taken all that much for Humphrey to have beaten Nixon.

Aside from the war, would the country then have been better or or worse off?

Would what followed have followed? Ford, Reagan and Bush and the changes in the national mind that resulted.

Watergate and the changes it meant in attitudes and what could be accepted.

The surge in the radical religious right.

So much.

The result of what Al did is disaster. It did not end the war.

The question in my mind is had he thought anything at all through other than getting Johnson out, without any thought about anything else.

I think it was not at all brilliant.

I do not question his motives at all.

But I believe the other option in fighting to end the war would have been much less hurtful to the country and could not have succeeded less.

I always liked and respected Al and I've seen first-hand the love and devotion of students to him. Some years before he died Lesar and I addressed the NSA Washington convention at the Mayflower. ^{with him} I spent some time preparing Al for an appearance on the David Suskind TV show

As far as I've read Chafe does not exaggerate his praises and I agree with them. After reading as far as I have, too.

But I wonder about the effects of his failures on those students he turned on. I've often wondered whether it was some gripe, real or imagined, that led to that poor man killing him.

The last time I remember seeing him he had sat through my doing as he did, insisting that those who opposed me have all the time they wanted. That was when I spoke at Hunter and he was teaching there. The crazy Yippies were there to break it up. When they were about to be thrown out by force I stopped it, kept responding to them, faced them down and they left on their own, frustrated and exposed. To the applause of the rest of the audience. Al came up to me after that was all over. He loved it. (The character who formed that group and led it is on the new JFK committee formed in DC recently, Alan J. Weberman.)

So I think it would be fine if there were to be a study of the effect of what Al did in dumping LBJ and on whether or not he'd thought past dumping him. Did he believe that Johnson could have controlled the military? On this Newman on JFK and the military in Viet Nam is informative, I think.

Meagher got him interested in the JFK case but nothing came of that.

He was a remarkable man but like the rest of us, not perfect. And I do think that his greatest success was a horrible failure as it would have been without Robert Kennedy as president. What then could have been expected is conjectural. But I think he elected Nixon.

Although he spoke of himself as a practising liberal and is so regarded, because he said he believed in the democratic system and because Chafe writes that way, was it really democratic for him to see that Communists, real and mostly

imagined, would be frozen out under the democratic system. Was there that much difference between what he saw to and the pre-McCarthyites and his successors saw to? He and the ADA people have their own responsibilities for the cold war, its acceptance and its perpetuation.

Hw