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What's in an Ad?

It seems only yesterday that we were explaining to our readers why we so genuinely regretted an inadvertent misquotation we had made of the Attorney General and why we felt so strongly that even such inadvertent misrepresentation was a legitimate source of anger on the part of a public official—or anyone else. In fact it wasn't yesterday at all; it was the day before yesterday, so there has been plenty of time for a related development in this field. We refer to an advertisement that would be funny, if it weren't so ugly, which appeared in relation to Senator Tydings in this newspaper, in relation to Congressman Tunney in the Los Angeles Times and in relation to other Democratic candidates for the Senate in other papers around the country.

The advertisement, which was signed by something called the "Committee for a Responsible Congress/Carl L. Shipley—Treasurer," varied its message slightly for apparent reason. For instance, it suggested that Senator Tydings—but not Congressman Tunney—was part of a group of people who found the use of "heroin by our young people" acceptable. Since this is true in neither case, we are at a loss to know why Senator Tydings was so specially favored. Similarly, the text of the ad changed slightly in its false and nonsensical characterization of a number of political citizens' groups that have backed the Democratic candidates against whom it inveighs. In one version, for example, the Council for a Livable World was characterized as a group "dedicated to ending our national defense," while in another it was characterized as a group "which opposes all national security programs." Since neither characterization is true, it can get one to wondering what all the editing was about. Finally, some of the same "quotations" appeared as evidence against both men, but some appeared only in one ad or the other.

Never mind: the point and purpose (and much of the text) were the same. Senator Tydings and Congressman Tunney were charged with being radicals and extremists in sympathy with everything most dreadful in American life today, and the principal means of "proving" this naturally unprovable point was to cite bits and pieces of things

they and others were alleged to have said over the past few years on those subjects most vexing the public at the moment. Just to refresh your memory, and with a second purpose in mind, we will recount some of this so-called evidence against the candidates and their political friends. Thus, under the heading "Encourages Student Violence," we find the following among the quotations offered against Senator Tydings:

"You have the God-given right to kick the government around—don't hesitate to do so."

—Sen. Edmund Muskie, Louisville Courier-Journal
Sept. 12, 1968

"Student dissent has not been a disease of the body politic. It has instead been a welcome sign of health."

—Sen. Edmund Muskie, Boston Globe,
June 8, 1970

"Instead of intimidating the public dissenter, we ought to welcome his independence and give his views a careful hearing."

—George McGovern, Congressional Record
Jan. 18, 1967

How's that for soft-on-studentism, for Encouraging Student Violence? Before you give your answer we should like to present you with some similar "damaging" evidence of our own unearthing—and it didn't take much unearthing at that:

"I do not agree with those who would sharply curtail the right of dissent on our college and university campuses on the ground that such

demonstrations give aid and comfort to the enemy . . . I believe it is permissible to be against a war, to be against the conduct of the war or against the draft system."

—Richard Nixon,
June 5, 1968

"Given our times, we cannot expect political demonstrations to be conducted like prayer meetings. We must expect language which may incite hostility or may be obscene. This is because the First Amendment protects all of us, including men and women who choose to be unruly, unreasonable, and impolite."

—Attorney General Mitchell,
July 2, 1970

"I am not against demonstrations."

—Spiro Agnew, quoted by Republican National Committee
"They [hippies] deserve understanding. Neither of my two daughters is a hippie. If one was, I'm sure I would understand."

—Richard Nixon,
October 4, 1967

In the diatribe against Congressman Tunney, we also find a section called "Soft on Campus Radicals" which includes the following statement by the congressman himself: ". . . the federal government should not become involved in the law and

order authority on campuses." As evidence of softness on campus radicals, we expect his statement pales next to that of Mr. Nixon at a press conference June 19, 1969:

"... we do not want the federal government interfering in and responsible for discipline in every college and university in this country... The responsibility should be theirs."

Back to Senator Tydings. The Committee for a Responsible Congress/Carl L. Shipley—Treasurer, quotes the senator directly (under the heading of "Tear Down America") as follows: "The myth of American omnipotence must be destroyed." Well, if that's not the Nixon doctrine, we don't know why we've wasted all that time reading those interminable transcribed pages of White House official explanation of it. As in:

"It was not President Nixon who said, we will fight any foe, we will resist any aggression... But you read the [Kennedy] Inaugural Address of 1961... this Administration came in at what was truly a watershed, when it had become apparent through the tragedy of Vietnam and through other experiences, that the United States could not alone police the world... part of the reason why we got into the war in Vietnam was the theory that aggression, wherever it occurred, was our job..."

Or take it from the President straight:

"... we cannot expect U.S. military forces to cope with the entire spectrum of threats facing allies or potential allies throughout the world."

—Foreign Policy Statement,
Feb. 18, 1970

That this sort of thing is fairly easy to do should not come as a surprise to anyone. What should be difficult, if you subscribe to the ethical assumptions set forth by Mr. Kleindienst the other day in taking us to task for a misquotation, is the act of deliberately misconstruing both the content and purpose of the statements made by public officials in good faith, or of deliberately ripping them out of context to make a spurious point. It should also be difficult to do these things if you have reason to admire the object of your smear and have felt prompted to say so to him. As our last quotation—this one straight and in full context—we offer you, in its entirety, a letter Senator Tydings received, dated August 3 of this year:

"Dear Joe:

Congratulations on your support for the D.C. Crime bill. It is too bad the merits were obscured by the exploitation of race politics by opponents. We are fortunate to have you in the Senate.

Sincerely yours,
Carl L. Shipley.