

Other Editors

Jim Comstock In The West Virginia Hillbilly

Every responsible person you can name in this country has had his say about the current epidemic of arson and looting. Like Calvin Coolidge and sin, they are "ag'in it." President Johnson has said time and again that "this country will not tolerate riots and arson and looting. It isn't American, he says. He says it with such force that people start to believe him. They say to themselves and to their neighbors, "President Johnson is going to terrorism." One wonders how. Senator Byrd said the same thing only he said how we weren't going to tolerate lawlessness. So did Mayor Daley of Chicago. And the mayor of Miami. The President took the words right out of their mouths to a certain point. He didn't say how. He implied that he would meet anywhere, anytime, anyplace with rioters and they would reason together. That is, of course, after they have burned and looted.

Now Attorney General Ramsey Clark is doing with the double-talking and adding to the administration's credibility gap. Asked by a group of editors to comment on Chicago Mayor Daley's shoot-to-kill for arsonists and shoot-to-cripple for looters, he said he did not think that was "permissible" and then added unless in "self-defense or when it is necessary to protect the lives of others."

Then he added the bit of fuzziness: "I think to resort to deadly force is contrary to the total experience of law enforcement in this country and would tend toward a very dangerous escalation of the problems we are so intent on solving."

What problem, General Clark? Why does racism have to be a part of the problem of rioters? Why does integration have to be connected with arson and looting? Actually, General Clark, aren't there two problems involved here? One social, one crime? Is there anybody in these United States who believes that the death of Martin Luther King was justification for terror? Wasn't that death an excuse for thugs and hoodlums to surrender to pent up savage desires? Kennedy was killed too, but that didn't call forth the young guards to burn a town.

It was Mayor Lindsay, I believe, who said that to shoot-to-kill was merely the placing of property values over that of human beings. I rather wonder where in America did we ever do anything else but. Why did we kill off the Indians? Why did we take Isthmus of Panama? How come we had Cuba before we lost it, and the Philippines which we still have after a fashion? How did we get Guam? Are we shooting to kill in Vietnam? And not only are we, but we are shooting to kill a bunch of poor villagers who haven't done one iota of damage to the Americans as some big city hoodlums have. The Lindsay-Clark school of American protection says that law must take its due course and the capital punishment does not rest with the constabulary. What they mean is for the policeman to arrest the man after he has tossed fire into a building. Arrest him and take him to court and fight a battery of OEO lawyers with a government subsidy.

I wonder if there might be a few exceptions to the Lindsay-Clark orders. Here's this policeman who has just arrested a looter and he's holding him for the Black Maria. Half way down the street is this fellow in deep mourning for Martin Luther King. He has his arm upraised

to toss a tear-and-gasoline soaked rag into this orphanage. The fire crew is fighting fire and snipers two blocks away? What does the policeman do? What would Lindsay do, Lindsay with the heart of the humanitarian? Or there's this fellow whose great great great grandparents picked cotton in Louisiana, getting ready

to have a cookout with a drug store. The cop on the beat knows who lives on the third floor up. Nice old invalid lady. Who dies, she or the arsonist? There is one thing the police know, and there's something that mayors of burned-out cities know, and that is the fellow with the Molotov cocktail is more lethal to more people than the policeman with a gun. And think how many times more lethal an arsonist is than the policeman with orders not to protect life and property with

his gun. Terrors in the streets is no more than warfare. It is an insurrection. Under such conditions and at such times, a sounder should notify all persons to remain indoors until the all-clear signal is sounded. It would be assumed that a violator would be on the streets for no good. He is to be arrested for the violation. It is that simple. But what

if he is seen at a distance with a fire bomb? Well, all a policeman can do is assume that there's an orphanage there, or an invalid lady. So what was it General Clark told the editors about shooting-to-kill? "I do not believe it is permissible except . . . to protect the lives of others." And the looters, what about them? There wouldn't be any.

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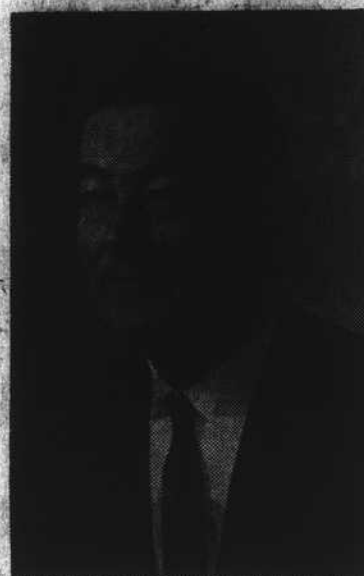


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Born Richlands, N. C. Attended Richlands High School and University of North Carolina. AB and LLB degrees from U.N.C. Married, three children, Episcopalian. General practice of law, Jacksonville, N. C., since 1945. Onslow County Solicitor 1947-48. Onslow Representative to General Assembly 1949, 1951, 1953, 1955, 1957, 1959, 1963. Onslow Senator to General Assembly 1963. Jacksonville City Attorney since 1955. Member N. C. Advisory Budget Commission 1955-58, Chairman 1957-58. Member N. C. General Statutes Commission 1959, 1963, and 1965. Past Pres. Jacksonville Kiwanis Club, Onslow County Bar Association and 4th Judicial Bar Association. Moose. Member American Judicature Society, Onslow County Bar Association, N. C. State Bar, and N. C. Bar Association.

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