

Sam file

To:Len

Fr:Bill

RE: The Campaign .

Some highly personal, perhaps not entirely political, observations on the campaign to this moment:

1. From Feb.1 to June 26, the only times I have felt ill at ease were those times when RN was not before the public eye. My idea of RN as an existentialist is perhaps more true than even I know; when he is not "existing" i.e., when he is not part of the daily consciousness of the average citizen as that consciousness is formed by the media(esp. t.v.) he seems to actually non-exist. Even when Rocky wasn't making news he seemed to be there in some sense. Perhaps this is because RN 's political existence, 1968, is a process of creation(or re-creation) which is made up of the daily bits and pieces of political exposure. He is a "new" RN; new in the sense that this RN is really not the same guy who was vice=prez, etc., but a guy who began to come to life on Feb.1, 1968 and who has become nothing more(or less) than the sum of his political actions and statements.

If this all sounds too metaphysical, let me try to clarify it by saying that Rocky has , damn it all, a political essence, something hâche which people remember even when he is not "there", but that RN is only what he is doing before the eyes of the public.

McCarthy has had so much exposure that it is difficult to make a judgment, but it seems to me that he too fades away from the mind when he is not there, on television. HHH has the office and the four-year public exposure, so that when he goes back to Minnesota, he is still there, i.e., existing, in the public mind.

What does this all mean? It means--to me at least--that we should not worry about the quality of RN's exposure as much as we should worry about the quantity. During the aftermath of the ⁱKing assassination, you might recall that I called you, panicky, demanding to know just when RN was going to make a statement. I look back on that as another instance of my strong feeling that RN must be there as much as possible.

Now over-exposure can hurt certain politicians (it was beginning to hurt Bobby, I think, and I'm not at all sure that Rocky could saturate the t.v with himself) because they are raw and exciting or maybe just dull. But RN should be there because, at his best, he is re-assuring, he is a comfort, he says that things will be o.k. even though they are bad now, etc. I can't see how anybody can get too much of that.

Last June, when we first met, I saw the coming campaign as a relentless, hell-for-leather, wild struggle in which we would keep punching until all the other guys dropped. It didn't turn out that way, for obvious reasons. But the idea of putting the pressure on, of bringing the fight to the other guy, of always being there--this idea is one which I have found difficult to do without. The Times said we were smooth, competent pros; I agree. But even pros can understand the need to keep creating the candidate as we go along, and that the process of creation in politics is not gimmicks-plus-exposure, but action-plus-exposure. It seems to me that we have stopped, from time to time (and, during the killings, for good reason) the on-going creation of RN. It seems that we have created him (or, to be accurate, he has created himself by his actions) once and have been living off that creation ever since. But he must re-new himself in the mind of the public by having the public re-create him and the only way they can do it is if they have the raw material of exposure, on t.v. This is not "image" building, but, actually, the new politics in its most subtle form; the more the public sees and hears RN, the more they can participate in his creation, i.e., the more they will come to think of him without being reminded of his existence by gimmicks.

I think we should think of saturation on a scale never before imagined. More later.