

Filthy Campaign Damaging To American Political System

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Lyndon Baines Johnson has been President of the United States for 11 months; and if Sen. Goldwater is right, then in that space of time the moral fibre of America has rotted away.

This is the heart of the Goldwater crusade: that the soul of American is festering, that our nation is in a state of moral collapse, and that the blame for this lies at the White House door.

This was to be the theme of the film "Choice," produced by a group calling itself "Mothers for a Moral America" (Mencken, you should be living at this moment!). The movie, which almost was the first stag film to be shown coast-to-coast, explicitly held President Johnson responsible for the decline in American moral standards. Shots of topless bathing suits, pornographic magazines, and the twist were to be intertwined with photos of a Lincoln Continental screeching down the highway, with beer cans being tossed from the window.

It is the kind of charge that is more than palpable nonsense; for the residue of the filthiest campaign of this century will pollute the American political system for a long time to come.

Attack Okay

There is nothing wrong with attacking an incumbent administration's policies long and hard; it is the duty of a candidate to tell the American people where his opponent has fallen short in his duties.

There is, however, something decidedly wrong in calling the President of the United States a thief,

a crook, a traitor, and the Primum Mobile of moral rot.

Pornographic magazines are not published by the U.S. Government Office; they did not make their first appearance in America on either Nov. 22, 1963, or January 20, 1961. Rock and roll was born and flourished in the fifties—Republican years. Are we to hold Dwight David Eisenhower guilty for the sins of Fats Domino? There were drunkards, dope addicts, sexual deviants, smutty books, off-color jokes, and public malfeasance before there was the Social Security Law.

Every generation knows, in its heart, that its offspring are going to hell in a handbasket at breakneck speed. Every younger generation is rootless, rebellious, disrespectful, immoral, and in fine a collection of bums. And somehow the Ship of State sails on, manned in time by many of these same lost souls.

Fragile Moral Base

It may well be that the moral foundations of the United States are fragile. In part we can blame the hypocrisy which pretended that sins unspoken were sins not committed; in part we can blame, really, whatever we want to and whatever will make headlines for a "courageous" minister, politician, or writer who has discovered that it's pretty easy to be against Sin.

What is deeply distressing about the 1964 campaign is that the Republican candidate is attacking political and economic policy with a thoroughly irrelevant issue—moral decay. If there is a casual connection between social legislation and a moral decline, no social or political scientist has demonstrated it. To suggest that the President's personal

or political life is responsible for crime in the streets or smut is a callous and wanton disregard both for the office of President, and more important, for the truth.

Certainly Lyndon Johnson must explain—soon and fully—the security aspects (if any) of the tragic breakdown of Walter Jenkins; certainly his knowledge or approval of the extra-curricular projects of Robert Baker must be discussed. Johnson owes it to us to tell us the truth.

Blame Misplaced

But it does not follow that the President is guilty of shepherding the American body politic down the primrose path to Hell. Such a charge reflects only the desperation of a candidate who takes the incredibly complex question of the moral state of a nation and seeks to explain it by the alleged moral turpitude of the nation's leader.

Sad to say, it is a tactic all too readily accepted by millions of Americans. Much of the vote that Goldwater gets—and that vote will at a minimum be 40 per cent of the electorate—will in part reflect the convictions of many that the President is an immoral man, whose policies (and thus the policies of the last 30 years) are responsible for the moral rot of the nation.

I wrote almost two months ago that it was going to be a long, long campaign. This is one of those times I wish I had not been right. For the hatred and bitterness of the 1964 campaign will inevitably overflow into the post-election period, leaving a trail of rancor that will require the arduous efforts of President Johnson to erase.