

# Off Center

Sol Plafkin

1967

“The highest merit we ascribe to Moses, Plato and Milton is they set at naught books and traditions, and spoke not what men, but what *they* thought.”

—Emerson, in “Self-Reliance”

Now that the first stage of the Adam Clayton Powell fiasco is over, it is with great humility that I must point a reluctant finger at a young man of potential greatness and leadership who has faltered, not irreparably I hope, and succumbed to the “traditions” of other “men.”

That man is John Conyers, Jr., the debonair congressman from the 1<sup>st</sup> District in north-central Detroit.

“Powell was my hero,” Conyers pleads. Yet, he accepted appointment to an investigating committee that could only arrive, at least, at a compromise for the seating of Powell, accompanied by an unprecedented severe censure, heavy fine, and loss of seniority.

Conyers signed the “compromise” report, then criticized it for being too punitive and left everyone dissatisfied, except, perhaps, the *Detroit News*.

Of course, there is sweet irony in the House’s rejection of the compromise and some sadness that the dynamic Conyers (who has consistently voted against the Vietnam war and HUAC) had not maintained a more consistent position (in accord with his own inner beliefs) against the whole series of hypocritical acts designed to strip the power of one of the most influential Negroes in American political history.

Col. Arthur Holmes, Michigan’s Selective Service Director, please take note: the decision of the U.S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Court of Appeals (which includes New York State) condemning the reclassification of U of M students for their opposition to the war in Vietnam was not written by a radical judge. The judge, Harold Medina, achieved quite a bit of notoriety a while back as the Federal trial judge of 11 Communist leaders in the late ‘40s under the Smith Act.

In the Communist trial, Medina was accused of conducting a kangaroo court and sentenced several attorneys (one of whom is now a prominent Detroit judge) to Federal prison for contempt of court.

It’s amazing how things can change. Maybe our forefathers really knew what they were doing when, after freeing themselves of British colonial restrictions on their profit-making activities, they stuck in the Bill of Rights as part of our basic law.

Col. Holmes, while you may assert that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Circuit decision does not affect Michigan (which is in the 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit with court offices in Cincinnati), it certainly will have a strong persuasive effect here when the matter is heard.

Florida’s governor is getting his own private police force, so the Detroit Police Department is getting its own private survey—courtesy of the Board of Commerce. Preliminary findings of the survey indicate that the police supposedly have a “better image in the eyes of the people it arrests and otherwise deals with regularly than it does in the community as a whole.”

Now, who’s kidding whom? If this survey is like some others I’ve seen around here, the interviewers were probably suburban housewives who wouldn’t dare dip their dainty little toes in the mainstream of the Negro ghetto.

So, instead of soiling their minks, they sit home in their dens and fill out the questionnaires by speculating, with husbands, about what probable answers would be.

One wonders how many inhabitants on Twelfth Street and Kercheval Ave. would really respond with a good “image” of our police.

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