

The Coat Puller

John Sinclair

1967

An Open Letter to George Romney

Dear Sir:

As a free man and a revolutionary, and as a citizen of the state of Michigan with strong roots in my own Michigan community of Detroit, I've been interested to follow your recent career as a "national" politician. I haven't really been too interested in your work as governor of the state of Michigan since that office has little or no relevance to my life nor have I ever been very interested in the office of president of the United States, since that office has even less relevance to my life. But the combination of events that has marked your entry into the national presidential race scene has captured my attention and my imagination, and I wanted after yesterday to say something about the whole thing.

Yesterday you spoke at the University of Wisconsin about "the right to dissent" and called yourself "a square dissenter." I read this in the *Detroit News*. You said you believed that dissent was valuable but only within the terms of the existing laws. Well, that's bullshit, but I don't care much about what you said in your speech anyway, because any political speech is merely rhetoric, and usually totally phony rhetoric to begin with. What interested me was the action of the newspaper-termed "hippies" at the University of Wisconsin. They jeered at you, booed you, called you names, celebrated the Bolshevik Revolution to your face, and did a lot of other silly shit, if the newspaper report is at all factual,

Now, I've read in the underground press that when you've gone to cities around the country you've made it a point to visit the free centers—the Haight Ashbury in San Francisco and the lower east side in New York City in particular. I've also noticed that my brother journalists have made it a point to put you down for what they call your exploitation of the free people—*EVO* even used you as the focal point for an editorial in a recent issue. I don't think they realize everything that is happening, and what your role might be in the future of this country, and I'd like to try to point out a few things I've been thinking about in terms of your relationship to us as free people in the United States of America at this point in our history.

You see, I think you're going to be the next president of this country, for whatever that's worth, and I also feel that you're the only "major politician" in the country who knows where the free people are at, or at least is sincerely interested in finding out where we're at. I knew you'd win where you came out and told people that you'd been brainwashed by the military-industrial establishment about the war in Vietnam and American foreign policy in general. As a former high-level member of this establishment when you were president of American Motors, you if anyone know exactly where those people are at, and that they will tell people literally anything to get them to buy their products. Of course, the free people have known about the military-industrial people all along—that's why we're free, or how we got to be that way—and we've never hesitated to say what we know about the American system and how it works. That's why it gives us so much hassle—not because we're dope fiends or degenerates or unemployed as their p.r. reads, but because they know that we're hip to them, and that wasn't supposed to happen, not with all those TV sets and schools aimed at our heads. We were supposed to believe all those lies—but we don't and now even you, George Romney, are starting to wonder a little—and in public, too, which is most important,

because you carry an influence with your people—the straight world—which we couldn't (and wouldn't) ever have. They know we're crazy, but you're supposed to be sane, and you're saying the same things we've been saying.

After all, it isn't so much the economy, or the war or the industrial complexes, or any of that scene, that really pisses young people off—it's the lies and hypocrisy that do it. It's impossible to deal with a liar, young People have always known that, and when people are based on a whole culture of lies just to get silly money and products, then they're really fucked up, and anyone with any vision at all—anyone who can SEE—doesn't have anything to do with those people. I know you're subject to that “reality” too, since you were brought up to lie just like the other “squares” (your word), but there is some shit that is just too rank to be eaten, and the war stinks like that.

Whatever your reasons for doing what you're doing, I'm behind you, George Romney, and I'll be happy to see you in the president's chair. You remind me of my father, and my father is an A-number-one straight shooter. He doesn't lie. My father is in your business—he makes cars to clog up the nation's highways—but he's just doing that because he feels that's best. He can change his mind, because within his own context his mind is wide open. He can be reasoned with, as the saying goes, and I think you can too. I think you want to know what the whole free scene is into because you think there might be something to it, and I'm sorry that my brothers in other cities haven't been friendlier to you and more responsive to what I see as a sincere interest in them. I don't know, I may be wrong—that might all be bullshit, since you're still a politician, and as far as I've ever seen politicians are not ready—but it's worth a try. We certainly haven't got anything to lose. I'd love to turn you on. If you ever come to your own city of Detroit—and you just live down the road, in Birmingham, where many of our young free people come from—I'd love to talk with you about our scene, if you're interested. I think you would be interested, if you would listen. We can tell you people an awful lot of good things, because we know we're free, you see, and we know how we got here. We know what this country needs to save itself, and we'd like to turn you on to it. Free.

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