

ANDREW TULLY

O'Brien's Apology About the War

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(Editor's Note: Andrew Tully is on holiday. During his absence his column is being written by various national figures.)

By **ROGERS C.B. MORTON**
Republican National Chairman

WASHINGTON—The most singular political utterance I have heard recently came from Lawrence F. O'Brien, my opposite number on the Democratic National Committee. Mr. O'Brien appeared before a group called the "youth participation sub-committee" of the McGovern Commission and proceeded to apologize to the young people of America for his past support of the Vietnam War. The chairman also wrung his hands over what he called "repression" in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

First of all, Mr. O'Brien's forum—the McGovern Commission—needs some explaining. It is a Democratic Party group that makes no secret of courting the youth vote, especially those who will be eligible in 1972 if the 18-year-old statute holds up in the courts. They would number about 11 million. Fittingly, the Commission Chairman is Sen. George McGovern who hasn't forgotten the temporary spell cast over some of the young by his brother-dove Eugene McCarthy in 1968.

"Don't Just Stand There — DO Something!"

To this Commission came Lawrence F. O'Brien, ready to plead his case, sorry for all the sabers he rattled as adviser to two Presidents . . . sorry that while the Chicago police were tangling with the Yippies at convention time, he remained aloof and said nothing.

Of Chicago, O'Brien said, "We can pledge that we will do everything we can, as a party, to see that it never happens again." Amen to that, at least. The sight of a great national party becoming the object of street brawling at its convention, with the delegates and the Vice President of the United States besieged in their stockyard fortress, scarcely served to uplift any American, whatever his political persuasion.

"Violent repression," O'Brien went on to say, "cannot be tolerated."

Well, unless my television set was lying, a lot of those dissidents in Chicago needed arresting. Many of them looked to be as bad as the scruffy mob that attacked the Chicago police in Grant Park recently because a rock band didn't show up to play.

But on with the O'Brien apologia. The Chairman, who served the President that ordered massive intervention in Vietnam, made this remarkable statement, "No political entity that helps to perpetuate the U.S. involvement in Indochina can expect to win the trust and allegiance of that segment of our citizenry most directly affected by the war." The segment most directly affected by the war, as I read it, is not the street

protestor and friends, but the young American rifleman slogging through a heavily-mined rice paddy in Vietnam. It seems to me his trust and allegiance should be directed only at the government which backs him up in the field and tries to shorten his war by actions like the Cambodian operation.

But let's go back to the clean breast of things made by O'Brien. His full confession was this: "Working closely with two Democratic Presidents in the 1960s, I defended the war publicly. I urged Congressional candidates in 1966 to run in support of the President's efforts in Vietnam. The United States Senate, including many of today's most outspoken opponents of this war, went along."

These remarks by the Chairman, incidentally, followed a pronouncement by the McGovern Commission that young people would be given full participation in the Democratic Party, including mandatory convention delegates between 18 and 30.

Normally, I could only commend the public abluion of any adult who wants to shoulder the blame, particularly one who sat in the councils of two Presidents. The language was certainly heartfelt and almost scriptural. Filled with contrition, he now lies down with the lamb. Somehow, though, I have a nagging suspicion it was just Larry O'Brien's Biblical bid for 11 million new votes.

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