



Letter from a Whig

John Lindsay's Journey Into the Night

George F. Will

WASHINGTON — John Lindsay is bright, handsome, young, ambitious, moving fast and going nowhere. That is the conclusion suggested by three facts.

The people who know him best — residents of his City — like him least.

The politicians upon whose favor he depends — leaders of the Democratic Party — have absolutely no use for him.

If he wants to win elective office again, he cannot avoid returning to the scene of the crime.

Why did he switch?

The most implausible explanation is the one he gives. He says that his philosophy of Government is more congruent with the philosophy dominant in the Democratic Party than that dominant in the Republican Party. That is true and explains nothing.

Both parties accommodate a respectable and respected minority of office holders whose philosophic disagreements with their majority are every bit as pronounced as Lindsay's disagreements with Republicans.

Lindsay switched for reasons of prudence.

Lindsay is a big boy. He has been around, and compiled a record. He recognizes that he cannot rise on the basis of that record. He thinks that if he disavows the party of his past he can separate himself from that record. And he actually seems to believe that the tough, ambitious leaders of his new party are lucky to get him.

The Lindsay track record, in office and as a vote seeker, is well known.

Under Lindsay taxes have increased almost as fast as pollution, and the City's booming industries have been pornography and prostitution.

Since 1965 the city payroll has grown by 90,000. The welfare rolls have grown by 500,000. Approximately 600,000 taxpayers have fled to suburbia. In so doing they have lost their right to one substantial pleasure — voting against Lindsay. That is about the only pleasure remaining to New York City residents, and they grab it with gusto.

Running in 1969 as the liberal candidate in the Nation's most liberal city, Lindsay managed to pull forty-two percent of the electorate away from liberalism.

Remember that in 1968 the combined Nixon and Wallace votes — the anti-liberal vote — amounted to only fifty-seven percent of the vote nationwide. So Lindsay, campaigning as an incumbent in the most liberal city in the Nation, managed to drive the liberal share of the vote below the national liberal vote attracted by that distinctly non-heroic flower of liberalism, Hubert Humphrey.

Given Lindsay's record, it is easy to understand why Republicans kept a stiff upper lip when he bailed out. It is easy to keep your composure when the local crank gets cranky with you.

What is significant is that Lindsay's arrival occasioned about as much jubilation among Democrats as his departure occasioned lamentation among Republicans.

A McGovern aid was commendably candid: "John Lindsay is an idea whose time has come — and gone."

If there is anything about which the gaggle of Democratic candidates are agreed, it is this: one of them should get the nomination. They all understand that it would be a fearful confession of Party weakness for the Democrats to award their most coveted prize to a Republican re-tread.

Those Lindsay advisors who represent themselves as "realists" want their thoroughbred to pass up the 1972 Presidential sweepstakes and, instead, run for Governor of New York in 1974. This advice may be tinged with realism, at least as regards Lindsay's Presidential hopes. Still, it is like advising Floyd Patterson to fight Frazier rather than Ali.

If Lindsay does run for Governor in 1974, the chances are excellent that he will be thrashed by Malcolm Wilson, who is currently Nelson Rockefeller's Lt. Governor. Wilson is a solid, con-

servative Republican, a proven vote-getter, and a favorite of the Party regulars. Moreover, by 1974 he may be the incumbent Governor.

Rockefeller may be headed for a position in the Cabinet.

This autumn John Mitchell will resign as Attorney General and take charge of the Nixon campaign. It is possible that Secretary of State William Rogers may move over to the Justice Department, where he served as Eisenhower's Attorney General. That would open up the Secretary of State position — one of two Cabinet jobs which Rockefeller might want.

The other job — Secretary of Defense — will be available if Nixon wins in 1972. Secretary Laird already has announced that he intends to resign in 1973. Rockefeller's ability, philosophy and appetites qualify him as a replacement.

What this means is that between Lindsay and Destiny stands a fine politician (Wilson) who can be expected to enjoy the cooperation of another fine politician (Rockefeller) who detests Lindsay.

Still, Lindsay's current maneuvering has a rough logic. Lindsay is acting on a familiar political rule: When your performance in office has ruined your standing with your constituency, seek a larger constituency. A larger constituency implies a higher office; the result is the curious phenomenon of advancement dictated by failure.

Another recent example of this maneuver is Senator Harris' campaign for the Presidency.

Harris has become increasingly intoxicated with liberalism. His Oklahoma constituency is especially abstemious regarding liberalism. So a veteran Oklahoma Congressman, Ed Edmondson, announced that he would challenge Harris in the Democratic primary.

Two things were clear. Edmondson would trounce Harris in the primary. But a divisive primary might open the way to a Republican victory in the general election. So before this calamity could result, Harris — to no one's surprise — began to hear voices from the ether telling him that he should be President.

Some money men ginned up a campaign fund sufficient to get Harris through a few primaries, after which, one can safely predict, the voices from the ether will fall silent. But by then Harris will have a graceful exit from politics and Congressman Edmondson will have clear sailing.

So Harris will clutter up the early primaries in order to gracefully escape a dismal showdown with his constituency. We can expect Lindsay's career to involve a similar scenario.

But chances are that Lindsay peaked a little early — in 1965. Since then he has managed to receive — nay, earn — the enmity of his old city; he has jeopardized his ability to win a statewide election; he has fled his Party; and he has poised himself for a plunge into Presidential politics just at the moment when such a plunge will generate — nay, earn — the lasting enmity

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THE

ALTERNATIVE

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The Asmodeus Letters

John Avey (with Apologies to C.S. Lewis)

C.S. Lewis, the late Cambridge don, wrote lucid, witty prose defending the currently unorthodox position of orthodox Christianity. He is, therefore, not as well known as he should be among American students since wit, lucidity and orthodoxy are sins that are as unforgivable as they are rare in classrooms, lecture halls and seminars.

Science fiction fans already know Lewis' classic works in that field, most notably Out of the Silent Planet; scholars know his work in medieval literature; everyone knows his unparalleled and unforgettable The Screwtape Letters the letters of a senior devil to an apprentice, quite easily one of the most popular and original religious works of the twentieth century.

John Avey offers in the spirit of C.S. Lewis what he claims are the spiritual equivalent of the Pentagon Papers. Attention, Attorney General Mitchell (or should it be Billy Graham?)

Screwtape
Director of Public Information
Democratic Demon's Republic of
Hades

My Dear Screwtape:

No doubt you are surprised to hear from me directly after all these eons. Well, one moves with the times, so to speak. One day the Prince of Darkness; the next, the President of the Democratic Demons Republic of Hades. As for myself, I preferred many of the old ways; but there is much to be said for the new-fangled methods. At any rate, it now befits me as a "democratic" leader to adopt democratic methods. No more of that fiddle-faddle of courtly ritual. (Between the two of us I had begun to find that part of it cloying in the extreme.)

But down to business. I have never congratulated you on the publication of your correspondence with your late, unlamented nephew. An admirable piece of work, that; and one which, as you know, earned for you the envy and respect of us all. Oh, I know there were those who said your letters (how did you manage to leak them so unobtrusively?) tended to make us look like laughing-stocks. Nothing, in my proud opinion, could be further from a lie, as we say. I am as aware as the next demon that good public relations gimmicks are hard to come by. So congratulations, both on your ingenuity as a letter-writer and on your excellent reviews in the media.

Which brings me to the point of this letter. More and more these days we Down Here are becoming aware of the growing opportunities for missionary work among humans who work in media." Have you had any programs in mind in order to help these media-types to do a bit of bad here and there? I would be extremely interested

in learning of your plans in this direction.

Cordially,
Asmodeus
President
Democratic Demons
Republic of Hades

My Dear Screwtape:

How very typical of you to show the kindness to ask my opinions on just what should be done to make better use of media types. If I were cynical, I might think my request caught you unprepared and that your reply was fulsome. But, as you know, I am not cynical, old friend. It so happens I do have an idea or two concerning this important area of concern. If my ideas can be of any help to you, please don't hesitate to use them.

My first "suggestion" (how delightful these democratic euphemisms can be!) would be to begin a pilot project and to give it your personal attention. Oh, I know the old saws about wise delegation of authority and all the rest of it, but when it comes to temptation, there is nothing like the personal touch of an old pro like yourself. Besides, when one assumes managerial responsibilities, one tends to lose the feel of the thing, as we say. So why not take some time off from your office chores, find a likely prospect and go to work on him. I think it will do you the world of good, and I'm certain that getting back to field work will be welcome after all these eons behind a desk. You might consider this a personal request, shall we call it, from me.

I look forward to your progress reports.

Cordially,
Asmodeus

Dear Mr. Minister:

As you can well imagine, I was surprised — no, shocked — by the report of your unfortunate failure in basic temptation. Since I do not have all the facts before me, I cannot make a final judgment, but I think it fair to say that you were perhaps a bit unwise in your choice of subject and rather rusty when it came to temptation techniques. As I wrote to you, times have changed, and we must change with them.

Why, for example, you chose to tempt a sixty-five year old police reporter for the *Hoboken Daily News* is quite beyond me. And what method did you use? A bribe! My dear, dear Screwtape, a bribe? Just what century do you think these humans are in? Bribes once were admirable devices to catch journalists, but they now have all of the subtlety (and, I might add, all of the accuracy) of a blunderbuss. No, no Screwtape, this will never do. For the moment, let us forget that the untaken bribe has led this old man to take a second look at his spiritual life, something he hasn't done since a hangover resulting from a minor debauch at the reception given for his sixth daughter's wedding. A temptation not offered is one thing, a temptation that backfires is quite another. But, as I say, let that pass. What we must do is to set you on the crooked and wide path once more.

First, as to a subject. Choose one of those bright, young decent graduates of a good graduate communications or journalism school. Make certain that you choose one who wants, more than anything else, to do a good job of reporting and one who has a great faith in the responsibility of the media to be fair and objective. This is the kind of subject that can test your wits. And, Screwtape, remember: it isn't how you play the game, it's if you win or lose that counts. I know you are probably licking your wounds at the present moment, but I also know that you can do the job. Indeed, old bean, you had better.

Sincerely,
Asmodeus

My Dear Screwtape:

Congratulations!

May I say I told you so? Getting the right kind of subject is half the battle. Your choice is perfect. He