



## “A Very Disgusting Performance”

**Date:** 1968-08-29

**Conversation:** WH6808-04-13334

**Participant:** Lyndon B. Johnson

**Participant:** W. Ramsey Clark

**Start Time:** 11:29

**Duration:** 02:15

**Place:** LBJ Ranch

SCENE SETTER: While discussing the violent clashes that had occurred outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago the previous night, Attorney General W. Ramsey Clark told President Johnson that most of the trouble had been caused “by excessive police action.” Johnson and Clark agreed that the network television news coverage of the events had been “ignorant.”

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**President Johnson:** What happened in Chicago [Illinois] last night? Anybody get killed?

**W. Ramsey Clark:** No, nobody got killed. A lot of people got hurt.

**President Johnson:** What—how did they get hurt? Hit with rocks or with clubs or what?

**Clark:** Well, I’d say nine out of ten got hurt by excessive police action. Hit with clubs.

**President Johnson:** And what were they doing?

**Clark:** A lot of them were, you know, troublemakers, but I’d say more than that, they were people who were just standing there and got caught in the thing. They were observers. They were middle-aged ladies pushed through plate glass windows, [*slight chuckle*] ’cause they just happened to be standing there. There were kids that would give a Bronx cheer, and three or four policemen would lay on them and just beat the hell out of them, and then not even arrest them. [*Pause.*] It was a very disgusting performance in my judgment, Mr. President. I think I had awfully good intelligence on it. I think it was caused by law enforcement. Absolutely unnecessary. I think logistically their problem was a cinch. My God, they outnumbered them, [*chuckles*] could outmaneuver them. If they’d acted with balance, there wouldn’t have been any trouble.

**President Johnson:** How many got hurt?

**Clark:** Oh, I’d say 2[00], 300.

**President Johnson:** How—anybody serious?

**Clark:** No, not that I know of. [*President Johnson acknowledges.*] By that I mean no critical injury that threatens life.

**President Johnson:** Did you get incensed any at the subjectivity of the networks?

**Clark:** Yes. Particularly because they were . . . well, subjectivity gets it. [*Scoffs.*] I mean, they don't—they were ignorant! They don't know what the hell they're mad about. I thought [Walter L.] Cronkite [Jr.] and several of them were just, you know, quite unreasoning. I don't believe they—you know, I think if they'd known all the truth, two-thirds of their feeling might have been justified. But I don't think they knew the truth, and I think . . . they . . . were not performing professionally.

**President Johnson:** [*Pause.*] Thank you, my friend.

**Clark:** Yes, sir.

**President Johnson:** Bye.

*End of excerpt.*

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