

## *Speaking Truth To Power*

**I**n all the stupefying tedium, hypocrisy, and flatulence of the Republican National Convention, there was only one refreshing moment of truth and candor: when the convention's youngest delegate got up to speak. Paul W. Walter, Jr., twenty-one years old, had unexpectedly won his primary in Cleveland on an anti-Vietnam platform. Now he arose to second the clearly futile, sad, but somehow noble candidacy of Harold E. Stassen for president. To a bored and unheeding audience, Paul Walter addressed these words:

The 13th Amendment to the United State Constitution specifically prohibits involuntary servitude, and the government is supposed to be the servant of the people. And yet young men who cannot even vote are drafted to kill and to die in a war that is never explained.

We are taught, Thou shalt not kill, do unto others as you would have others do unto you, and love thy neighbor. And yet 10 percent of our Gross National Product is spent on war every year. ... And those few who do not put principle above personal ambition are threatened with prison, such as Dr. Spock, the 20th century Sir Thomas More. Or ridiculed as Governor Stassen, the modern Don Quixote. ...

These men have helped build the foundation for a lasting peace. The next time we deride them, we should ask if we have done as much . ....

Thank you for your inattention.

The reporter noted, as a supposedly classical symbol of the “generation gap,” that Paul Walter, Sr., had been a floor manager for Senator Robert Taft at the 1952 Republican convention. But the reporter was only following clichés and labels, and had forgotten even his recent history. For Senator Taft would have well understood and, I believe, warmly approved, as a veteran battler himself against war and militarism.

In one sense, though, the reporter was quite right. For few people over twenty-one today have been able to grasp what young Walter and the rest of his generation are talking about. For young Walter was, in a real sense, the spokesman for his generation at that convention, and we ignore him only at our peril.