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Look Out, Democracy

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Sen. Joseph Clark of Pennsylvania sat in front of the mike, and his questioner was interested in the plight of American democracy. How seriously is its survival threatened and whence comes the attack?

"There are three major threats to the successful survival of American democracy," Senator Clark replied, knitting his brows into a frown. If you think communism was among them, you are entitled to another think. Senator Clark, glancing furtively over his shoulder (one imagines), listed the dangers in this order of importance:

1) The "military-industrial complex" — a modern and not too sophisticated version of the simple minded theory, current during World War I and after, that "munitions makers make wars";

2) The Central Intelligence Agency;

3) The (shudder) Federal Bureau of Investigation.

These, according to Senator Clark, are not merely *among* the dangers to democracy. They are, in his words, the "three major threats". And it follows logically that if all three were abolished forthwith, American democracy could breathe a sigh of relief. What would be left to fear?

American democracy is threatened. Of that, there can be no doubt. But Senator Clark's list is a fit object of considerable doubt. Somewhere among the top few dangers, there ought to be a place for that curious failing among the electorate that enables men of so little perception to be seated in the Senate of the United States.