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Kennedy Supporting McGovern Nomination

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WASHINGTON.—Sen. Edward Kennedy favors George McGovern as the Democratic candidate for president and believes that McGovern will be nominated.

He is ready to endorse McGovern publicly if and when his support would really make a difference, but that step is not likely to come before the convention.

He is determined not to be the nominee himself this year.

Those are the views that Kennedy has outlined to friends in private conversations in the last few days. They can be taken as authoritative expressions of his intentions.

WHETHER OTHER politicians and the public will finally accept the conclusion that Ted Kennedy is not care-

fully positioning himself for his own nomination is another question. There is an abiding suspicion in the country that he hopes to be a compromise choice this July. Every new turn in the primary campaign brings fresh speculation about a Kennedy candidacy.

Kennedy is of course aware of the suspicions about his aims, and bothered by them. He has in fact told friends that, if a stalemate seemed to be developing between McGovern and Sen. Hubert Humphrey, he could be pushed into an early McGovern endorsement — to avoid any appearance of hanging back in hopes for himself.

Otherwise, his present feeling is that an early endorsement could be a doubtful asset to McGovern. It might be resented by some McGovern supporters as a glamorous intrusion into

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a campaign that has until now, been a very personal achievement.

MCGOVERN'S SUCCESS. Kennedy tells friends, has been to do it on his own; he has to go on showing that he can do it.

That view fits with the past Kennedy family practice, which has generally been to avoid favoring particular candidates in intraparty contests. Kennedy has remained publicly neutral in the 1972 nomination race so far, although it was no secret that he and his family like George McGovern. There have been Kennedy men working for all three of the leading candidates — McGovern, Humphrey and Edmund Muskie.

The collapse of the Muskie candidacy has increased the pressure on Kennedy to make a choice between the remaining competitors, Humphrey and McGovern. The natural family affinity for McGovern has become a public fact as Robert Kennedy's daughter Kathleen, a junior at Radcliffe, has begun campaigning for him.

MCGOVERN HAS not yet pressed for a Kennedy endorsement. But it clearly could be of great value to him now, as he goes into the primaries in the big industrial states of Ohio, California and New York. Kennedy as a campaigner would have an opening to the groups that McGovern especially needs to attract, blacks and ethnic industrial workers.

In discussing the situation with associates, Kennedy gives two answers to the argument for an early declaration of support: that McGovern has to broaden his appeal on his own, not as

a Kennedy man, and that he is likely to be able to do just that.

Like other professionals, Kennedy thinks McGovern's need now is to show the older forces in the Democratic Party — and especially George Meany of the AFLCIO — that he is not a rigid, doctrinaire candidate. But Kennedy, unlike some others, believes McGovern must hold to his positions on the war, on reform and defense budget cuts, making his firmness a contrast to Humphrey.

KENNEDY THINKS McGovern can reassure the party elders without alienating his own supporters. He thinks McGovern will win in California and New York and that the momentum will then certainly carry him through to the nomination.

The hard question for Edward Kennedy is what he would do if that scenario did not work out — if McGovern faltered and the convention seemed to be heading toward Humphrey or a stalemate.

Kennedy has no personal dislike for Hubert Humphrey and would support him if nominated. But it is clear that a Humphrey candidacy would turn the Democratic party back from the direction in which it has been moving and would be anathema to the younger forces with which Kennedy has identified himself. The disastrous division and bitterness of 1968 would almost certainly be repeated.

THOSE ARE the reasons that will be put to Kennedy for running himself if McGovern slips. All that can be said at this point is that Kennedy does not think he will slip and does not want to face the question.

[Final paragraph of
column, as carried by
NYTimes, same date:]

There is certainly no external sign that Kennedy wants the nomination in 1972. He has been enjoying and using the freedom of a noncandidate to take tough positions on such issues as amnesty for draft resisters. His family is evidently concerned about the question of his physical safety if he did become the candidate. He is only forty, and he can wait four or eight years in the knowledge that time will let Chappaquiddick fade and give his political persona more weight.