

## THE KENNEDYS

### End of the Affair

As untidily and unsatisfactorily as it began, the legal inquiry into the incident at Chappaquiddick came to an abrupt end last week. After a few hours of fruitless probing, a grand jury appointed to investigate the death last July of Mary Jo Kopechne adjourned in frustration without clarifying any of the mystery that still surrounds her death.

The grand jury, sitting in Edgartown, Mass., began its work with high hopes. Foreman Leslie Leland, a Vineyard Haven druggist, pledged a complete and independent investigation; many jurors were apparently in an indicting mood. Their ambitions were quickly dashed by State Superior Court Justice Wilfred Paquet, 67, a no-nonsense jurist with a reputation for running a tight courtroom. Somewhat Churchillian of mien and manner, Paquet swore the jurors to secrecy, warning them that their lips were "sealed not for a month, not for a year, but forever." He also narrowed the scope of their investigation by informing them that they could consider only those matters brought to their attention by the superior court, the district attorney or their own personal knowledge.

Paquet's charge left the grand jury with few options. Only three charges were possible against Senator Edward Kennedy: manslaughter, perjury or "driving to endanger," a traffic offense that is generally combined with other charges, notably drunken driving. Citing a ruling by the state's Supreme Judicial Court, the judge denied the jurors' request for a look at the transcript of the January inquest into the accident. District Attorney Edmund Dinis, who had access to both the transcript and the report on the proceedings by Presiding Justice James Boyle, told the jurors there was not enough evidence to indict Kennedy on any of the charges. The jurors themselves made no move to call anyone involved in the events surrounding the accident; four new witnesses, who testified for less than 20 minutes in all, provided nothing useful in the way of evidence.

**Case Closed.** With that, the grand jury gave up. Accompanied by a sheriff in formal dress, the ten men and ten women assembled glumly before Judge Paquet in Martha's Vineyard's 112-year-old courthouse. The judge asked Foreman Leland if the jury had any presentments to make. "I have nothing to present," said Leland quietly. "Not you," snapped Paquet. "Does the grand jury have anything to present?" Startled, Leland said that the answer for the grand jury was the same. His reply came as a relief to Dinis, who has become an increasingly reluctant participant in the drama involving Massachusetts' most powerful political family. "The case is closed," he said.

The doubts remain. Several grand ju-



JUSTICE PAQUET

The jury had nothing to present.

rors believed that Kennedy should have been brought before a court to answer for events that they still find inadequately explained. Many were disappointed at their inability to return an indictment against him. "Most of us felt Kennedy was morally responsible for the death of that girl," said one woman juror, ignoring Paquet's warning about sealed lips. Said a male juror: "I don't believe this will ever be resolved as far as some people are concerned."

The case is resolved, however, as far

MARTLAND KLOTZ—CHICAGO DAILY NEWS



SHERMAN SKOLNICK

Only the archives can tell.

as the courts are concerned. Dinis' statement that no further action is planned clears the way for the release of the inquest transcript and Justice Boyle's report. All that stood in the way of the release was resolution of the kind of dispute that typifies courthouse politics in Massachusetts. Freelance Court Stenographer Sidney Lipman, following a well-established Bay State practice, made arrangements to offer the 764-page transcript for sale at \$1.05 a page, or \$802.20 a copy. He has sued to halt its publication by the court at the bargain-basement price of \$75 a copy. Rejecting his suit, the state has gone ahead with its plans to release the inquest documents this week. Few expect the transcript to produce any surprises or further clues to what really happened at and after the tragic party for the boiler-room girls.

### Another Death Plot?

That conspiratorial army of would-be historians who specialize in the assassination of John Kennedy may have a brand-new plot to play with. In Chicago last week, Legal Researcher Sherman H. Skolnick filed suit in federal district court against the National Archives and Records Service to release certain documents. He contended that the archives had unlawfully squirreled away the details of a hitherto unknown plot or plots to kill J.F.K. at the Nov. 2, 1963, Army-Air Force game in Chicago, 20 days before his assassination by Lee Harvey Oswald.

Quixotic as his quest may sound, Skolnick, who is a paraplegic, is not a man to be taken lightly. He is a well-known courtroom gadfly with a penchant for legal battles, and he played a key role in getting two Illinois Supreme Court judges to resign amid charges of conflict of interest brought by him (TIME, Aug. 29). Thus it was not surprising that people with information about the alleged plot sought him out to help make their case; among the informants is a former Secret Service agent.

As Skolnick tells it, the Chicago assassination plot involved a supposed accomplice of Oswald's by the name of Thomas Arthur Vallee and three or four other men whose identities are uncertain. Their plan to kill the President had to be abandoned when Vallee, a lithographer, was picked up by Chicago police on a minor traffic violation on the day of the game. After spotting a hunting knife on the front seat of his car, the cops looked further and found a rifle. Vallee was put on probation for concealing a weapon; for the traffic violation he drew a \$5 fine, which was suspended. He has since disappeared, as has the photograph that should be attached to his arrest card.

Skolnick firmly believes that Oswald was somehow involved in Vallee's alleged plot. In an effort to prove it, he wants to see certain documents that the Warren Commission considered in

making its report and then turned over to the archives, where they are to be kept secret for 75 years. Skolnick argues that the archives can prove that the 1962 Ford Falcon driven by Vallee was—as he believes—linked to Oswald in some way or even registered in his name. Skolnick also maintains that the archives have Government documents showing that Klein's Sporting Goods Co. of Chicago had no receipt for the gun allegedly sent to Oswald—an allegation that raises the possibility that the weapon actually came from some other source.

The Justice Department, however, has responded to Skolnick's suit with a "No comment," and National Archivist Marion Johnson claims that he has "seen no evidence in the records connecting Vallee to an assassination attempt." The Government has 60 days in which to answer the suit.

ees but have the power to halt the railroads. Last week, as the end of the moratorium approached and no agreement had been reached between railroad management and the workers, Congress reluctantly turned to an unusual solution. By legislative action, it imposed what would be the terms of the unions' next two-year contract—an action that some labor experts thought might face a constitutional challenge. The terms, which provided a 68¢-an-hour wage increase for 48,000 shopcraft workers who now make \$3.60 an hour, were the same as the ones that the railroads and negotiators for four rail unions had agreed upon last December. At that time, the rank and file of the sheet-metal workers, the smallest of four rail unions, balked, principally because of an anti-featherbedding clause that would have allowed other rail employees to perform "incidental work"

"wisp of smoke" as other one if Washi crease the ante. The / have trouble enough the current raise, whic lion a year. Congress that it will not pick suggestion that first- be raised from 6¢ to 1

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UNION LEADER GUS JOHNSON ADDRESSING NEW YORK LETTER CARRIERS  
A potentially expensive wisp of smoke.

## LABOR

### Staving Off the Strikes

The dilatory 91st Congress stands a good chance of surpassing Harry Truman's "do nothing" 80th as a model of legislative nonactivity. Faced with the possibility of several nation-crippling strikes, however, both House and Senate last week proved that they could overcome inertia and act with dispatch. While an illegal strike by "sick" air controllers entered its third week and wildcatting Teamsters threatened chaos on the highways, Congress moved quickly to head off further trouble with the railroad and postal unions.

What forced action on the railroad crisis was the end of the 37-day moratorium that Congress had approved in March to block a strike threat by 6,000 intransigent sheet-metal workers—who constitute only 1% of all rail employ-

in areas normally assigned to the metal workers. That provision remains in the terms imposed by Congress. Though sheet-metal men expressed displeasure, the expectations are that the new contract will stick.

**Dead on Arrival.** On the postal front, Congress also moved quickly to make good on the promises that the Administration had made to end the illegal eight-day postal strike. Both the House and the Senate overwhelmingly passed legislation, which President Nixon is expected to sign this week, providing a 6% pay increase for 5,300,000 federal employees. The increase would include the nation's 725,000 postal workers, who stand to get annual pay hikes ranging from \$371 to \$507 a year. Even that did not please everyone. Gustave Johnson, leader of the letter carriers' Manhattan Branch 36, which began last month's strike, called the settlement a

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### Up Against the

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