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RFK Creditors Due Half, Third Pay?

Word that attorneys for the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy have offered major creditors one-third on the dollar to settle \$3 million in presidential campaign debts, by way of immediate reaction, may raise some eyebrows. Facts of the case, however, may add fuel to various drives to have political campaigning financed in other ways.

A Beverly Hills law firm has written Kennedy campaign creditors it could scrape up only \$1 million for debts incurred in Indiana, California, Oregon, Nebraska and South Dakota. Those owed small sums are offered half payment.

Asked if it were odd for a family of wealth (as are the Kennedys) not to assume the campaign deficit, a press aide to Jesse Unruh, a Kennedy California campaign manager, said, "This is standard procedure." Another comment was that the Kennedy family had put up plenty of money for Robert's presidential aspirations and felt his supporters should pay some of the costs.

We don't believe, however, that's the way to do it. Politically speaking, Kennedy devotees and campaign finance managers might be wiser to stage a broad fund-raising effort — even to spaghetti dinners, or better, Irish stews—to honor fully the campaign debts. Why should certain business firms, not politically connected but providing contractual services, be left "holding the bag"?

Then there would apparently be the question of what confidence creditors would have in providing business services in any future political campaigns of Sen. Edward Kennedy, who political observers seem to think is maneuvering already for a presidential nomination.

About this time last year RFK's

Indiana campaign was being characterized by Hoosier politicians as "fantastically expensive." The blitz paid off as—exactly one year ago yesterday — Kennedy copped the state's primary race with 42 per cent of the Democratic vote.

Curiously, it was also about this time last year that RFK himself and others had successfully led a campaign to nullify the Presidential Campaign Fund Act of 1966, which Sen. Russell Long had promoted to "open the way for men of humble financial circumstances to run for President of the United States."

The act had called for a \$1 optional tax-exempt contribution by all federal taxpayers in the hope of making millions available to each political party. Mechanics of the plan, however, seemed inadequate.

Since then, the Committee for Economic Development has come up with other ideas in the report, "Financing a Better Election System." The subject remains one on which much more will be said and written.