

Political View: Book Hurts RFK

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World Journal Tribune Special

WASHINGTON, Jan. 24—The William Manchester book has achieved an ironic result far removed from its original intent. It has tarnished the image of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and produced an undercurrent of sympathetic support for President Johnson.

This is the view expressed by elected officials and political observers in Washington and in states from New York to California.

The battle over Manchester's story of President Kennedy's assassination has become so acrid that no one, except outright foes of Kennedy, are willing to risk public involvement at this point.

But conversations with individuals who sit with Kennedy in the Senate or who are involved in politics outside Washington indicate that the past few weeks have taken their toll on the Senator's popularity.

Even persons who are unfriendly to Johnson suddenly are expressing the view that Kennedy's motive in working with Manchester on "The Death of a President" was to undercut Johnson.

One person said: "Knowledgeable people have thought for a long time that Bobby was behind a 'dump Lyndon' movement. This corroborates their thoughts."

A former White House aide reported that in Texas some politicians who have been bitterly anti-Johnson in the past now are pledging their backing for 1968 and are prepared to do anything they can to prevent

Marianne Means

reports a climate of suspicion and criticism developing about the Kennedy family.
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Kennedy from winning the presidency in 1972.

Johnson and Texas come off rather poorly in Manchester's book, much of which is based

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on material from Kennedy and Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy.

One political leader of the Lone Star State said: "I never have thought much of Lyndon. But now I understand what he's gone through.

"The Kennedy's have so displayed that they've put their own ambitions ahead of patriotism, I'm obsessed with the necessity to support Johnson."

Louisiana Gov. John McKeithen presumably represented the feelings of many of his constituents and fellow Southerners when he said yesterday that he believes Kennedy wants the Democratic party defeated in 1968 so that

he can lead a comeback in 1972.

In California, the anti-Kennedy feeling growing out of the book controversy is compounded by antagonism over Kennedy's attack a few months ago on Los Angeles Mayor Sam Yorty during testimony on the problems facing the cities.

A Midwesterner suggested that Kennedy's recent dispute with FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover over electronic bugging had had an even more detrimental effect on the Senator's standing.

In New York City, Washington and Boston, Kennedy is being criticized openly at gatherings of influential individuals who previously spoke admiringly of him.