

Post 1/26/67

The Week That Was . . .

By William S. White

Kennedy, Reagan Impair Image

PROFOUND ALTERATIONS in the political power structure of this country — alterations seriously weakening two presidential possibilities — are simultaneously occurring just below the surface. It is a safe prediction that in political terms this will one day be seen in retrospect as indeed The Week That Was.



White

The new Republican Governor of California, Ronald Reagan, has deeply damaged his prospects for any place of national leadership in his Party by the abrupt decision of the Board of Regents under his spur to discharge Clark Kerr as president of the University of California.

Reagan has yielded to right-wing emotionalism, including his own. Kerr's head has now been taken for reasons neither wise or

prudent but only in sheer frustration over an infinitely unpleasant and complicated state of affairs at Berkeley which he never made and which his ouster will only inflame.

The young Democratic Senator from New York, Robert F. Kennedy, has been no less badly damaged by an emotional spasm from his left-wing followers, and himself, which has presented to the country an unexampled scene of savage hissing over the Kennedy family-sponsored book on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

The Kennedys, having hand-picked William Manchester to write a family-controlled work on this national tragedy, then attacked both his professional integrity and his private honor in the long and clamorous controversy which arose over his resistance to some of the family censorship of the book.

Manchester has now replied in terms no less bitter, saying among other things that "people who are bet-

ting their futures" on Sen. Kennedy for the Presidency are "willing to do anything." The whole affair, which was wildly wrong from the start in the determination of the Kennedys to make the history of a somber era a private family property, has now become so ugly as to repel the reasonably minded majority of this country.

Sen. Kennedy himself is seen as a politician swimming in a sea of malice and back-biting and it is no longer possible to say that anybody—the Kennedys on the one side or Manchester on the other — can escape grave discredit. In purely political terms Sen. Kennedy personally emerges as inevitably the central figure of an unexampled national nastiness which clearly hurts both his own Party and this Nation's reputation abroad.

Both as to Kennedy and to Reagan it has been a dreary story of unchecked emotionalisms, in each case cultist in tone, that have overcome reason. It is perfectly true that the Berkeley campus had been a seething chaos which blackened the good name both of higher education and of the University of California.

At the very least, Governor Reagan should have let his own chair become slightly warm, and should have allowed Kerr some opportunity to state his case, before taking this fast step into the realm of non-thought.

By this action, Reagan has lost practically the entire academic and intellectual community of the United States. It is precisely these estranged intellectuals to whom the Republican Party nationally has been desperately seeking to make some appeal.

The upshot of it is that Reagan almost certainly will go to the 1968 Republican National Convention no longer as a converted moderate but rather as a back-slid ultra-conservative. No doubt he will still control the powerful California delegation; but the capacity he once had to be a king-making source—if not in some conceivable circumstances even a king—has now gone.