



Associated Press

Equalizing the odds for '72: As balloons ascend for Bobby Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey visits the President's office for gifts and counsel



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**THE WHITE HOUSE:
LBJ vs. RFK?**

By departing last week for a much-publicized twelve-day swing through Africa, Robert Kennedy inevitably set off a fresh round of speculation over his long-term political aspirations. Was the African jaunt, with its unwelcome visit to segregated South Africa, another chapter in Bobby's buildup for the White House? And was Lyndon Johnson moving to steal Kennedy's thunder by deploring white supremacy in Africa in a speech (NEWSWEEK, June 6) delivered just before Kennedy's departure?

Seeking the answers, NEWSWEEK's Charles Roberts sat down with members of the President's inner circle to discuss a subject that LBJ never broaches in public: his views on the junior senator from New York. Roberts' report:

The President is keenly aware of Robert Kennedy's ambition to capture the White House in 1972 (if not sooner). But relations between Lyndon and Bobby remain correct. As a White House source put it: "The President is an earthy, sentimental man. He fully understands the desire of the Kennedy family to regain what was torn from them at Dallas." But to hear his aides tell it, Mr. Johnson does not feel challenged directly by the Kennedy clan; his main concern is to preserve "an even contest" between the senator and the Vice President—if they are still leading contenders six years hence. (The somewhat thwarted HHH has been limping behind RFK in recent polls.) Humphrey, who celebrated his 55th birthday May 27 by picking up an armful of gifts from LBJ, often sits down with his boss to vent his frustrations.

Virtually all the men around the Pres-

ident insist that Lyndon Johnson, who personally selected Hubert Humphrey as his Vice Presidential running mate, will not try to force the Democratic National Convention in 1972 to choose his earnest protégé as its Presidential nominee. "It's too early to say flatly just what the President will do," a White House informant said. "But if you know his attitude toward both men and toward the Democratic Party you can make a pretty good guess. He won't make the mistake that President Harry Truman did in opposing Jack Kennedy [for the nomination in 1960]. He could lose all of his influence with the Democratic Party if he did that."

Running 'Feud'? If there is, in fact, a running "feud" between the Kennedy brothers on the one hand and the Johnson-Humphrey team on the other, LBJ insists he isn't aware of it. Instead, he sees the "feud" as both a ploy by the press, ever probing (and magnifying) differences between the camps, and as a product of the senator's surge toward the White House, which impels him to assume positions slightly to the left of the Administration. One White House staffer cited press handling of the President's Africa speech as an example of the distortion process: "Actually," he said, "the President started planning the speech more than two months ago."

With a clinical politician's eye, Mr. Johnson privately wonders whether the senator's increasingly frequent jabs at LBJ's Great Society will aid the Kennedy candidacy. "I've got no quarrel with Bobby," the President told a friend recently, "and he should have no quarrel with me. He is of a different generation." (Kennedy also sometimes speaks in private of the "generation gap" between himself and LBJ.)

To keep the "feud" talk from spilling

over into a genuine quarrel, his aides say, the President has twice sent messages to the senator. The gist, in both cases: let's be "tolerant and understanding" of news stories that might tend to drive us apart. The emissary in both cases: No. 1 Presidential aide Bill Moyers, the only member of the Johnson staff who often dines at the Kennedys' McLean, Va., estate, Hickory Hill.

Whether LBJ will continue to try to keep the Presidential race "even" until 1972 is a question that only he can answer. Meanwhile, Johnson men are resigned to watching Kennedy maneuver while their boss soft-pedals party differences. "It's a lot easier to maneuver," one LBJ adviser noted ruefully, "when you don't have the ultimate responsibility for determining national policy."

Kennedy himself maintains a fatalistic attitude. Just before hopping on a London-bound jet, he remarked to a friend: "Who knows where either of us will be six years from now?" But for all of Bobby's fatalism, his own course is charted—and determinedly pursued.

ARMED FORCES:

Service Charge

For 80 frustrating days, the U.S. Navy anchored a small armada off the southern coast of Spain while it grappled in the murky depths of the Mediterranean for the H-bomb lost through an Air Force collision (NEWSWEEK, April 18). It now develops the Navy kept careful track of the escalating expense of its eighteen-ship, 3,000-sailor search of the sea. Last week the cost of the quest was out: \$6 million. So was the reason for the meticulous bookkeeping: the Navy bucked the bill to the Air Force for services rendered.