

Aide Reports Reason Johnson Was Chosen

N. Y. Times News Service

Washington — A close associate of John F. Kennedy's says Mr. Kennedy chose Lyndon B. Johnson as his running mate in 1960 principally because he wanted to be sure that if he won the election he would have a more cooperative and trusted man than Mr. Johnson as Senate majority leader.

Kenneth P. O'Donnell was appointments secretary to Mr. Kennedy throughout his presidency and a special assistant to Mr. Johnson until January, 1965, when he resigned. He is now in a four-man race for the Democratic nomination for governor of Massachusetts. He lost a similar primary contest in 1966.

In the issue of Life magazine published today he quoted Mr. Kennedy as saying, "I'm 43 years old, and I'm the healthiest candidate for President in the United States ... I'm not going to die in office. So the vice presidency doesn't mean anything."

Southern Votes

"I'm thinking of something else, the leadership in the Senate. If we win, it will be by a small margin and I won't be able to live with Lyndon Johnson as the leader of a small Senate majority. Did it ever occur to you that if Lyndon becomes the Vice President, I'll have Mike Mansfield as the Senate leader, somebody I can trust and depend on?"

O'Donnell says Mr. Kennedy called it essential "to make peace now with Mr. Johnson and House Speaker Sam Rayburn" so the two Democratic congressional leaders would not "ruin me" when Congress resumed after the convention.

O'Donnell quotes Mr. Kennedy as saying that without the support of Mr. Johnson and Rayburn in Congress, "I'll be the laughing stock of the country. Nixon will say I haven't any power in my own party, and I'll lose the election before labor day."

"Keeping him (Mr. Johnson) friendly until Congress adjourns ... is more important to me than Southern votes, which I won't get anyway with the



Kenneth P. O'Donnell

Catholic thing working against me. I doubt if Lyndon will even be able to carry Texas," Mr. Kennedy reportedly added.

Carried Texas

As it developed, the Kennedy-Johnson ticket carried Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina and Texas; losing Florida, Tennessee and Virginia to the Republicans and Alabama and Mississippi to slates of unpledged electors.

The article states that President Kennedy was aware of Mr. Johnson's unhappiness as Vice President and "leaned over backwards to keep him involved in important government affairs," giving him the privilege, shared only by Robert Kennedy, of entering his White House office unannounced through the back door from the garden.

When Johnson's election campaign was approaching in 1964, the article contends, "The simple fact was that Johnson

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Kennedy Aide Tells of Choice Of Johnson

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didn't want anybody to be his vice president. He felt threatened by anyone who had a constituency. That, in Johnson's eyes, would detract from his own victory."

O'Donnell writes that Mr. Johnson wanted to try Mr. Kennedy's maneuver before the 1964 Democratic convention, and said "I've been looking at some new polls. I've decided on Mike Mansfield.

Sometime between then and the convention, Mansfield went to the White House and told Mr. Johnson: "Under no circumstances will I ever accept the nomination of Vice President."

Confirming the account, Mansfield emphasized in an interview that the President had never offered him the nomination but that he had stepped in "in case he was thinking about it."

Generally, the men involved confirmed most of the incidents in the O'Donnell article but efforts to reach Mr. Johnson for comment through his Texas aides failed.

Point of View

War Policy Continued By Kennedy's Death

By MARY McGRORY

Special to The Bulletin

Washington—Now that it will not make a difference, we are told that President Kennedy intended to withdraw all American troops from Vietnam in 1965, after he was safely re-elected.

Kenneth P. O'Donnell, the President's White House aide and now a candidate for governor of Massachusetts, writing in this week's Life magazine, reveals that Kennedy, under the influence of Gen. Douglas MacArthur and the Senate majority leader, Mike Mansfield, had determined to wind up the war, in the face of rightwing opposition, in the first year of his second term.

O'Donnell's revelations may start a new debate about the true mind of John Kennedy, but they seem unlikely to help end the war. During the 1968 campaign, there was considerable speculation as to whether Kennedy would have persevered in an unpopular war that produced such high casualties, such bitter divisions and the enmity of the youth that idolized him.

O'Donnell says Kennedy, at the time of his death, had come to see the hopelessness of the policy he unquestioningly accepted from President Eisenhower.

MacArthur's Warning

It was Gen. MacArthur, surprisingly, who "stunned" the President in 1961, after the Bay of Pigs, with his warning about the folly of trying to match Asian manpower and the absur-

dity of the Domino Theory (that the fall of one country leads to the fall of the next) "in a nuclear age."

MacArthur sounds like a Senate dove of today in a conversation that Kennedy reported to O'Donnell after a White House luncheon.

"The general implored the President to avoid a U.S. military buildup in Vietnam, or any other part of the Asian mainland . . . (he) went on to point out that there were domestic problems — the urban crisis, the ghettos, the economy — that should have far more priority than Vietnam."

President Kennedy, who at the time was caught up in the "counter-insurgency" mania which had swept the New Frontier, was subsequently "startled by the passionate objections of Mansfield. But he told Mansfield privately, after a White House leadership meeting, that he agreed with him "on the need for a complete withdrawal from Vietnam."

Confides Timing

"But I can't do it until 1965," he told Mansfield. "After I'm reelected."

And he told O'Donnell: "In 1965, I'll be damned everywhere as a Communist appeaser. But I don't care. If I tried to pull out completely now, we would have another Joe McCarthy Red scare on our hands."

[Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy (R-Wis) was chairman of the Senate's Permanent Investigators Subcommittee hunting Com-

munist in the Truman and Eisenhower administrations.]

The tragedy, it would appear, is that Kennedy kept his true mind a secret from his senior advisers. When, after his assassination, the shattered group gathered to advise Lyndon Johnson, they unanimously advised him to continue the Kennedy policy, which apparently, they thought was to press on in Vietnam.

Kennedy, in a broadcast Sept. 2, 1963, gave a hint of disengagement. He said of the Vietnamese, "In the final analysis, it is their war, they have to win or lose it." Forty-seven Americans had then been killed.

Captive of Saigon

But Kennedy, like the two Presidents who have followed him, was a captive of the Saigon government, which was then in the hands of the Diem brothers. A week later, presumably after an outcry from them, he reverted to the hard line. He said he believed in the domino theory.

"What I am concerned about," he said, and two Presidents have since said basically the same thing, "is that Americans will get impatient and say because they don't like events in Southeast Asia or they don't like the government in Saigon that we should withdraw. That only makes it easy for the Communists. I think we should stay."

Kennedy feared the wrath of the right, although he was apparently prepared to brave it in time. His two successors have

both continued the war on the theory that the conservatives would not tolerate anything less than a face-saving conclusion.

President Johnson used to tell doves they should be grateful to him for holding back the Hawks. President Nixon tells callers he is saving the liberals from the hard-hats.

Right-Wing Feared

The villain of the piece is Joe McCarthy. Three Presidents, who were on the scene while he was laying waste to the liberal establishment and independent thought in government, preferred war and the risk of political oblivion to a right-wing fury.

It is idle to wonder what life would be like now if only Kennedy had prevailed upon MacArthur, the martyred hero of the militarists, to tell the country of his detestation of the Vietnam war.

Three Presidents sought furiously the ideal ambassador to South Vietnam. Their time would have been better spent finding the envoy to the right wing of their own country.

Mr. Nixon seems unlikely to be moved by this voice from the grave. He is carrying on the war, apparently for the same reasons that kept President Kennedy from stopping it. And if the appeasement of the right is the dominating political consideration, it is well to remember that Mr. Nixon is closer to the right and expects more from it.