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Unruh Embraces New Politics And Sings New Image Song

SAN JOSE, Calif.—One of the more remarkable sights of the 1968 campaign unfolded here the other day, when Jess M. Unruh, the tough boss of the California Assembly and leader of the Kennedy delegation to the Democratic National Convention, suddenly burst into song in the midst of a political speech on the California State College campus.

Unruh was speaking of the need for welfare reforms, when he lifted a quavering tenor to sing a couple lines from that old Wobbly song:

"Oh, why don't you work like other men do?"

"How can I work when there's no work to do?"

It was not a performance that would cause Pete Seeger to look to his laurels, but the kids applauded Unruh heartily for "doing his thing," and they applauded again when he told them he shared their dream of making California "a bastion of hope for the New Politics."

"New Politics" remains a murky concept, but when as shrewd and battle-scarred a veteran of the Old Politics as Unruh decides to make it his slogan in an image-rebuilding that also includes dropping the final "E" from his first name, one had better take notice.

The aspect of "New Politics" most visible on the Speaker's tour on behalf of Democratic legislative candidates, designed to preserve the Party's shaky 42-to-38 Assembly majority for his serve as a warmup for his expected 1970 gubernatorial campaign, is its scorn for Party regularity.

ALTHOUGH HE is noted for enforcing the toughest Party discipline in the history of the California legislature, Unruh was criticizing the national Democratic Administration at every turn

and saying as little as possible in behalf of the Democratic presidential nominee, Hubert H. Humphrey.

When a San Jose student, for example, asked Unruh why he failed to mention Humphrey in his speech, Unruh replied, "I figured there would be a vocal supporter in the audience who would give me a chance to make a statement on him. I have nothing but the utmost respect for Mr. Humphrey." (Silence from the students.) "I disagree vehemently with him on Vietnam." (Cheers.) "I disagree vehemently with some other policies of the Johnson Administration, but I don't hold him particularly responsible for them."

At other stops on his current tour, Unruh has said the American people have "lost faith in the veracity" of the Johnson Administration. He has said Mr. Johnson's domestic policies are "almost as complete a failure" as his foreign policies. And he has added that "it's about time the Democrats were honest enough to admit that America hasn't become a better place in

Potomac Fever

By Jack Wilson

Jackie loses her \$10,000 government pension, now that she's married, but that's ok—living on a yacht is cheaper. You don't have to hire anybody to cut the grass.

which to live in the past four years."

Some Democrats have wondered aloud whether such statements by the honorary co-chairman of Humphrey's California campaign are really conducive to Humphrey's victory.

But the Speaker asserts that "the biggest crisis in our country is the crisis of confidence" and "all of us in public office must level with the people."

IN AN INTERVIEW, he added pointedly:

"I don't think those who wait to make their criticisms (of the Johnson-Humphrey record) until after the election will find that they are believed."

What Unruh appears to be saying is that the only Democrats who can hope to survive the predicted wreckage of the national ticket next month are those who were vocal in criticizing its programs and principles. That is the converse of the argument that was invoked against Nelson Rockefeller by Richard Nixon and Republican regulars this year; namely, that Rockefeller had disqualified himself from national leadership in the Party by his vocal criticism of the GOP's 1964 platform and the candidates.

That turn is just one measure of the rapid change taking place in American political thinking as the "New Politics" that subordinates Party loyalty to "principle" and "individual conscience" takes hold.

As public opinion analyst Samuel Lubell pointed out recently, "The organizing reach and cementing pull of Party loyalty has rarely, if ever, been more feeble" than it is this year.

Eight years ago John Kennedy could make a great point of the absence of Republican label from some of Richard Nixon's billboards. Six and four years ago, George Romney earned the label "Lonesome George" because he did not list his Party affiliation on some of his literature in Michigan. But this year, it is a rarity to see a billboard for a candidate of either Party that identifies his Party affiliation.

Just as liberal Republi-

cans did in 1964, this year droves of liberal Democrats are saying nothing about their national ticket and praying that they will be spared the voters' wrath against the Administration. Consciously or not, they are emulating the tactics for which many of them have criticized their southern conservative brethren in the past.

There is even the unprecedented spectacle of a defeated candidate for the presidential nomination, Sen. Eugene McCarthy,

making a national campaign tour on behalf of anti-Administration Democrats and refusing at each stop either to endorse the Party nominee or to condemn write-in efforts on his own behalf.

WITHOUT CRITICIZING this "New Politics" philosophy of every man for himself, it seems pertinent to ask two questions of the theoreticians of the movement.

First, is the price for the Party that indulges in "New Politics" inevitably to be defeat in the elections immediately at hand? In 1964, when the GOP got a dose of "New Politics," the result was a Democratic landslide that buried pro-Goldwater and anti-Goldwater Republicans alike. Will that same fate befall the Democrats this year?

Second, if Party identification and Party loyalty are eliminated as factors in the campaign, what will replace them as cohesive ties within the Government that the voters choose? In the "New Politics," for example, what kind of leverage will a President have with members of his own Party when he tries to move his program through Congress?

Wayne Morse, the maverick Senator from Oregon whose career as a Republican, independent and sometime Democrat has been a manifestation of "New Politics," gave his own answer to the last question at a Portland high school the other day.

"Don't drag out the old bromide that if every Senator voted his conscience, it would undermine Party responsibility," he told the students. "I say we will only get responsible parties when the members of those parties follow where the facts dictate, rather than allowing partisan considerations to cloud their judgment."

Perhaps that is what the "New Politics" promises—a Senate made up of 100 Wayne Morses. One wonders if Jess Unruh would accept that as a model for the California Assembly.