

To: WEISBERG

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## Bobby's Man Out West

**SACRAMENTO** — Assembly Speaker Jesse Unruh made it unmistakably clear here yesterday that he was laying the groundwork for New York Sen. Bobby Kennedy to announce his candidacy for President.

First, he told a press conference that Kennedy has "almost a duty" to run for President. And he observed that a widespread "disenchantment" with President Johnson has spread through the land.

This is just the type of thing a candidate in the wings would want to come zinging eastward on the news wires to enhance his "wanted" image before stepping onstage to accede to such popular demands.

**THEN UNRUH** provided assurances for anyone who might not recall that—in addition to perhaps being California's most powerful Democrat—he is the closest political chum the Clan Kennedy has in the West. Reporters inquired whether he had discussed the situation with Bobby. Indeed he had, Unruh replied, and as recently as the previous night. In fact, he added, they had numerous conversations during the day and evening.

Would Kennedy enter the California primary for a confrontation with the incumbent President in the nation's largest state?

Unruh allowed as how he would have to wait to see if the Senator decides to become a candidate. But, as a sort of interim stop-gap, he introduced an utter stranger to the Capitol press corps.

She was Mrs. Justine Riordan of Sacra-

mento—a political unknown that Unruh said he had never previously met. Mrs. Riordan smiled and nodded, but said not a word. Hers was strictly a walk-on role—but it was an important one.

Mrs. Riordan was one of three political strangers who had taken the necessary first legal step to put a Kennedy slate on California's June primary ballot. The absence of recognizable political names led many politicians to the mistaken belief that they represented no more than a group of zealous self-starters.

Unruh's introduction of her could mean only one thing. Here was the vehicle he plans to use to put a muscular pro-Kennedy team into the primary battle.

Whatever names Jesse Unruh has been called by his foes, a naive wheel-spinner has never been one of them.

It is unlikely Unruh would have executed such carefully-prepared plans in public merely for the exercise. He gave every impression that he already knows—through his frequent phone conversations with him—that Bobby Kennedy already has made the decision to go.

**IN FACT**, many Capitol watchbirds believe that buddy Jesse knew—or had a strong hunch—of Bobby's plans quite some time ago. Or was it sheer coincidence that he decided not to become involved in a U.S. Senate race and declined an invitation to join other Democratic "regulars" on a pro-Johnson slate?

As Kennedy's man in the largest state, Unruh might concern himself with loftier matters than Assembly rollcalls if Bobby makes it.