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Today and Tomorrow . . . By Walter Lippmann

Who Killed Cock Robin?

BY ALL REPORTS, none of them denied at the White House or by Sen. Kennedy, the President is very particularly furious at finding that the Kennedy family has joined the opposition on Vietnam. The President has something to be furious about.



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For Robert Kennedy has been most reluctant to oppose the President and has waited for a long time to make the break. The fact that he has now done it testifies to something the President does not want to hear: namely that the Democratic opposition to his course in Vietnam has reached a point where a politician who aspires to national leadership must align himself with that opposition.

ROBERT KENNEDY is not one who would choose to be a voice crying in the wilderness. Temperamentally, he is not one who likes wildernesses. He is not one of the breed of the dissenters. His instincts and his appe-

tites are to be where real power is, and that is why it must be especially disquieting at the White House that he has broken his long silence. For Lyndon Johnson too is acutely interested in the sources of power, and in this affair one professional has spoken to another.

The Kennedy break cannot be explained in terms of short-term political ambition. Unless President Johnson withdraws voluntarily, there is no conceivable way that Kennedy can be nominated and elected in 1968. It is in fact unthinkable that he would make a fight for the nomination in 1968. But 1972 is a quite different matter. A new generation will be present then, and it is clear that Robert Kennedy cannot be with it if he shrinks from the battle now.

IN THE EYES of the President and his partisans the dissenting Democrats whom Kennedy has now joined openly are rebels who are wrecking the Party. The record should be kept straight. The dissenting Democrats have not broken away from the Party. They are standing where the Party stood in 1964 when Johnson was elected, and they are opposing the Presi-

dent's efforts to lead them into camp with Goldwater and Dirksen. It is Lyndon Johnson who has broken with the pledges of his Party, and the dissenting Democrats have refused to follow his lead and to turn their coats.

The record is quite plain. The Johnson reversal early in 1965 is the root of all the deviousness which has made such a shambles of public debate. The President has been trying to hide the reversal, for it is this reversal which has made necessary the semantic tricks which have prevented serious discussion. The American people are unhappy because they are confused and bewildered by the persistent and deliberate muddying of the waters of opinion.

WHAT HAS BEEN done to the spirit and morale of the Nation will not be easily or quickly undone. For the Nation is being governed without the support of, against the feeling of, great segments of its spiritual and intellectual leadership. A nation is not happy when it is not at peace with its own conscience. It is not surprising that there is so much anxiety and despair.