

Kennedy Neutrality Is Foreseen by Associates

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Special to The New York Times



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Senator Edward M. Kennedy

WASHINGTON, July 23—When Senator Edward M. Kennedy returned to Washington one day last week to sign papers that had been accumulating in his absence, he hesitated in his car outside the Old Senate Office Building.

"I just can't go in there and face them," he told a staff member. The car took off and the Massachusetts Democrat was soon back in seclusion at the Kennedy compound at Hyannis Port.

Seven weeks after the assassination of his brother Robert, the 36-year-old heir to the Kennedy political fortunes and power is still too much moved by the tragedy to face either his colleagues' condolences or their advice as to his future.

His associates say that this is why he has refrained from saying what his political role will be this year and why he has, in fact, apparently reached no decision as to what he should say and do.

However, a number of them have become increasingly con-

vinced after successive conversations with him that he will announce, probably before the Democratic National Convention opens on Aug. 26, that he will remain neutral in the fight for the party's Presidential nomination.

They believe, that is, that he will neither align himself with Senator Eugene J. McCarthy of Minnesota nor yield to increasing pressure to become the Vice-Presidential running mate of Hubert H. Humphrey.

Then, some Kennedy associates say, the Senator will issue policy statements on Vietnam and the cities that will, in effect, take issue with the policies that the Johnson Administration has followed in these areas.

Mr. Kennedy would thus avoid becoming involved in a clash over personalities but would use his influence to try to move the party more toward positions advocated by Robert Kennedy and Senator McCarthy.

Also, some Kennedy people believe, such a role would increase the pressures on Vice President Humphrey to move away from President Johnson's record.

"The idea is to avoid personalities and stress issues," said one Kennedy associate. "And this may be the role

Continued on Page 24, Column 2

Continued From Page 1, Col. 7

that Ted can best play this year."

Mr. Kennedy's views on Vietnam and the cities are close to those advocated by Robert Kennedy in his Presidential campaign.

On Vietnam, they both contended that the United States was wrong in becoming so deeply involved, that there should be a de-escalation of military action, that South Vietnam should assume a greater burden of the fighting and that the United States should take stronger steps against corruption in South Vietnam.

View on Cities

On the cities, both said the Johnson Administration had not gone nearly far enough in providing employment, housing, education and other means of eradicating the slums.

The rationale in Senator Kennedy's sticking to the issues route rather than taking a direct stand in the Presidential race is that he would be helping his party in the November election without damaging his own position in politics.

To most Kennedy associates it is unthinkable that the Senator should either seek the Presidency himself this year or run for the No. 2 spot with Mr. Humphrey.

he has been under tremendous, conflicting pressures in the weeks since Robert Kennedy was shot and killed in Los Angeles. On the one hand, members of his staff, personal friends and members of the family have been urging him to refrain from taking an active role in the race this year.

On the other hand, a number of other associates, the political professionals with whom he has been close, have been telling him that if he does not accept a spot on the Humphrey ticket, the Republicans are sure to win.

Both John and Robert Kennedy, these men say, gave their lives to the Democratic party not to dismiss such a bid lightly.

Edward Kennedy, it is said, listens to them all. But it is the former group — men like Stephen E. Smith, his brother-in-law, and David W. Burke, his administrative assistant—who have his ear.

He has been spending his time counseling and consoling the Kennedy widows and orphans who have gathered at the Kennedy compound for the summer. He goes for long walks with Ethel and Jacqueline Kennedy. Like his brother John, he loves the sea and he spends days on a 60-foot chartered yawl, the Mira.

He has returned to Washington occasionally to be on hand in the event his vote should be needed on a crucial bill.

So far, it has not been necessary for him to be in the Senate, and he has told associates that his presence and arguments are not needed to pass gun control legislation, that the deaths of John and Robert Kennedy by firearms should be argument enough.

Members of his staff do not expect him to return to the Senate before Congress recesses for the conventions. His staff handles the work and he makes the important decisions from his home.

Still, the pressures continue. The Edward Kennedy suite of offices on the fourth floor of the Old Senate Office Building buzzes with activity. His staff is besieged with requests for information on what he will do in politics, for interviews and "or pictures—the kind of re-

quests that most politicians long for.

Vice President Humphrey, who has indicated he would like to have Senator Kennedy for a running mate, has sought an audience with him. So far, he has declined.