

Evans and Novak Why Long Was Beaten

WASHINGTON —The first clear sign of success for Sen. Edward M. "Ted" Kennedy's dramatic holiday putsch against Sen. Russell B. Long of Louisiana as majority whip came from a most surprising source: Sen. Richard Brevard Russell of Georgia, patriarch of the Senate and leader of its Southern legions.

In a telephone conversation with Kennedy, Russell said that, naturally, he would be backing fellow-Southerner Long to retain the No. 2 post in the Democratic hierarchy. But, Russell added, Southerners would not be "putting any roadblocks" in Kennedy's path. Without such roadblocks, Kennedy would be home free.

Thus, the deepest irony of the first successful purge of a Senate Democratic leader since 1913 involves the South. Precisely because Russell's Southerners did not go down to the wire for Long, there is now no Southerner among Senate Democratic leaders, a rare occurrence in this century (and the first time since 1950), and Southern influence in the Senate is at an all-time low.

Just why the South should commit such an overtly self-destructive act stems partly from the fact that Teddy Kennedy is far more a "Senate man" than either of his brothers and has never provoked the South during six years in the Senate. But more important, it is attributable to fractured relations between Long and his Southern colleagues.

Long's flamboyant, ad hominem oratory never had been appreciated by austere Southern grandees like Russell and John Stennis of Mississippi.

The breaking point came in 1967 when Long's histrionics as unsuccessful defender of Sen.

Thomas J. Dodd of Connecticut put the usually imperturbable Stennis, in charge of presenting the case against Dodd, in a black rage.

Accordingly, while Northern liberals were helping Kennedy in last week's whirlwind telephone campaign, Long was left to fend largely for himself at the telephone in Baton Rouge.

At Friday's Democratic caucus, Southern powerhouses Russell and Stennis said not a word for Long.



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The Southerners making the two seconding speeches for Long—Louisiana's Allen Ellender and Florida's Spessard Holland—are not in the same league with Russell and Stennis.

In fact, Ellender did more harm than good. Contending that Kennedy was an interloper still wet behind the ears, Ellender called on him to drop out (amid much tittering in the caucus). That presumption may have switched one vote—from Long to Kennedy.

With Russell on the sidelines, Southerners broke ranks. Four senators from the old Confederacy backed Kennedy—including first-term Sen. William Spong of Virginia, who wants to become a member of the Senate Commerce Committee.

Spong wavered, but was finally talked into backing Kennedy by Sen. Warren Magnuson of Washington, the Commerce Committee chairman.

Even beyond the South, Russell's help was sorely missed by Long. Hawaii's Daniel Inouye, a youthful member of the Senate establishment, is a Russell protege on the Armed Services Committee and might well have been influenced by him to vote for Long. Lacking word from Russell, Inouye backed Kennedy.

To compensate for customary Southern help, Long sought support from Vice President Humphrey's partisans by invoking the Kennedy menace in 1972. On the telephone with one senator close to Humphrey, Long argued that a Kennedy defeat now would enhance Humphrey's chance for president in 1972. The Humphrey man would not buy.

Simultaneously, Kennedy was conducting a subtle campaign based not so much on ideology and regionalism as on depicting Long's forces as a faintly disreputable element in the Senate. For instance, Kennedy forces emphasized that Dodd was on Long's side. When one Kennedy aide suggested a bid for Dodd's vote, he was overruled; Dodd would be more valuable as foe than friend.

The result was an overnight recasting of power realities in the Senate. Sen. Robert Byrd of West Virginia, the Dixiephile conservative who has been quietly and efficiently filling the leadership vacuum as secretary of the Democratic caucus, now seems stymied.

Sen. Edmund Muskie of Maine, by refusing to seek the leadership for the second straight time, has sacrificed his clear position as leader of the Senate liberals.

Instead, Teddy Kennedy is now clearly heir-apparent to Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield and ready to assume considerable powers right now from the power-hating Mansfield. But for all the vaunted efficiency of a Kennedy operation, this wouldn't have happened had Russell Long's fellow Southerners decided he was worth saving.

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the small society

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