



# Senator Kennedy's New Experiment

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SENATOR EDWARD KENNEDY'S big decision has already filled acres of newsprint with commentary, analysis and explanation. All the same, nothing has been said about the really major experiment Senator Kennedy means to make, now that he has cut himself free of all the complications of a possible presidential candidacy.

"I want to see what I can really do as a free senator," he told me after reaching his decision. "When everyone thinks you may be going after the White House, you can't take a single step; you can't make any move at all, that isn't interpreted in terms of presidential politics. Getting away from that is what I mean by becoming a free senator."

"I've got a lot to do, too. There is my health bill, first of all, that I've been working on for so long. With no one at either end of Pennsylvania avenue thinking that passing a Kennedy bill will help a Kennedy nomination, I have a lot better chance of getting something done that really needs to be done."

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PUT AS SIMPLY as Senator Kennedy puts this new experiment he wants to make, the novelty and significance of his aim may escape most people. In fact, however, if Senator Kennedy succeeds in putting a Kennedy health bill on the statute books, he will have pulled off a feat without any real parallel in nearly three decades.

Just why a period of legislative fertility was followed by verbose sterility, no one has yet explained satisfactorily. It is a hard fact, however, that the only major postwar statutes bearing senators' personal stamps are Robert A. Taft's Taft-Hartley Act, and Lyndon B. Johnson's ever-memorable Civil Rights and Voting Right Act.

Meanwhile, the liberal Democratic senators of Senator Kennedy's group have been busy for over a quarter of a century with a game resembling the ballet. They are always striking the most beautiful attitudes, in other words, but when all is said and done, there is nothing left but air.

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TO TRY to break this boring pattern is the essence of Senator Kennedy's proposed experiment. Nothing could be more interesting, especially in view of all the gabble about "congressional" instead of "presidential" government. In reality, we cannot have congressional government today, any more than we had congressional government in President Roosevelt's time. It would be a disaster to attempt it.

But we certainly can have what Senator Kennedy means to attempt — serious, practical, legislative initiatives, by liberal senators and representatives with the patience to do all the needed homework, plus a toilsome obstinacy. To have that begin again would let fresh air into the Senate now shifting with unjustified self-admiration.