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An essay review of "Robert Kennedy: A Memoir," by Jack Newfield (Dutton, 318 pp., $6.95)

Link Between the New Politics and the Old

by GLORIA STEINEM

On that long bad day last summer when Robert Kennedy's body lay in state at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, one of the friends standing honor guard beside the coffin was Senator George McGovern. His turn over, McGovern stayed on to watch the silent stream of mourners, and four more Kennedy friends now taking their turn at vigil: Mayor Richard Daley and his sons.

No one saw the irony then, two months before Chicago, that McGovern, Senator Abraham Ribicoff, and two other dove Senators should be replaced by a man soon to personify much they disliked and wanted to change. But McGovern remembers watching Daley stand, head bowed, over the coffin; his face growing red with emotion, the cords of his neck standing out uncontrollably just as they did again when he shook his fist and yelled obscenities at Ribicoff on the convention floor. Only this time, Daley was crying. His big-hearted, fighting Irish friend was dead, and he was crying.

When I heard that story, I remembered another that reporters told among themselves after the funeral; one that is documented in this book. Late at night, when Kennedy's body had just been brought back from Los Angeles and only a handful of friends and journalists were scattered around the shadowy pews of St. Patrick's, the tie-less, shaggy-haired figure of Tom Hayden was seen seated alone. And he was crying too. Revolutionary, founder of SDS, empathic visitor to Hanoi, organizer in Newark's black ghetto (and, as described by Jack Newfield, who was in the church, too, "an apostate Catholic, with a green cap from Havana sticking out of his pants pocket"), Hayden was mourning the death of a political leader he often disagreed with, but one—perhaps the only one—he and others like him could talk to.

So in Chicago, Tom Hayden, who had been discussing with Kennedy ways to keep blood from flowing in the streets, became the young leader most harassed, followed, and threatened with death by Daley's police. Since then his radical and compassionate philosophy has become more hospitable to violence then it ever was before. As for Daley, some of his worst enemies believe he would have called off his forces had someone he trusted told him (as Humphrey would not) about the real police-rioting and head-crackings going on in the street. ("He's a repressive politician," said an anguished McCarthy delegate, "but he's not a monster.") Without a candidate who could and would talk back, without that feisty little Irishman who could *win*, Daley isolated himself more and more. Now his political future and personal pride depend on casting the Tom Haydens of the world as The Enemy.

This is the loss Jack Newfield is writing about: the one potential President both Tom Hayden and Dick Daley would talk to and mourn for; the man who, in the last year or so of his life, became an emotional, intellectual, and activist link between the New Politics and the Old. "Robert Kennedy was the one politician of his time," Newfield writes, "who might have united the black and white poor into a new majority for change—and American liberalism hardly noticed."

The lack of notice, of understanding and recognition on the part of middle-class, educated, "liberal" Americans clearly frustrated and angered Newfield. The purpose of this memoir is to

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delineate Kennedy's proper place in history; to block out that "mistaken public image of Robert Kennedy created by the simplified and static reporting of mass media" and replace it with the flesh-and-blood man who was his friend. "The Kennedy," advisor Fred Dutton once said, "with soul."

Newfield does this very well, especially when documenting Kennedy's appeal to all the poor, from militant black to backlash white.

Unlike the issue-oriented intellectuals who were confounded when McCarthy voters switched to Nixon, or Kennedy voters to Wallace, Newfield perceived from the beginning the power of class and character and heart. (Perhaps not such a bad thing as the issue-oriented fear. "A candidate's speeches tell me what he did yesterday, or today," explained a former Clean-for-Eugene medical student who had switched to Nixon. "His character tells me what he'll do tomorrow.")

Nixon and McCarthy, however far apart their political positions, came across as cool, *laissez-faire*, middle-class men who valued reason, education, and a certain decorum. (McCarthy's bridge-building to the young on the issue of Vietnam was irreplaceable but, as David Riesman pointed out, it led most effectively to the children of the white middle class.) Kennedy and Wallace, on the other hand, shared a "hot" style that came across less well on the cool medium of television. They valued experience, emotion, and action; and seemed to be, if not presently working class, at least aware of what life among the working classes was all about.

"The Kennedy with soul."

Of course, Kennedy won support with hope; Wallace, with fear. But those voters who switched from one to the other seemed to prefer a communication of their real fears to no communication at all.

Newfield explores this Kennedy phenomenon in chapters on his politics ("Beyond Liberalism") and his primary victory in Indiana. "When Kennedy used the phrase, 'my people,'" Newfield explains, "he meant Negroes, or Catholics, or children, and not liberals or intellectuals." Kennedy himself explained his appeal to poor whites, in spite of his identification with the much-feared blacks, by remarking that he was "shanty Irish" and Eugene McCarthy "lace-curtain Irish."

"You know," Kennedy told Newfield in Indiana, "I've come to the conclusion that poverty is closer to the root of the problem than color. I think there has to be a new kind of coalition to keep the Democratic Party going, and to keep the country together.... We have to write off the unions and the South now, and replace them with Negroes, blue-collar whites, and the kids. If we can do that, we've got a chance to do something. We have to convince the Negroes and poor whites that they have common interests. If we can reconcile those two hostile groups, and then add the kids, we can really turn this country around."

In that kind of revelatory quote lies much of this book's value. Unlike most Kennedy biographers, Newfield has relied very little on Popular Wisdom or secondhand research. He followed Kennedy for the last twenty months of his life, copiously filled ten notebooks and, having come to criticize and stayed to find a remarkable kinship with his subject, he managed to be around at a lot of crucial moments, large and small.

Such as Kennedy's first acquaintance with the Dump-LBJ movement, initiated by Al Lowenstein, and his evaluation, even before he had been directly asked to run: "I would have a problem if I ran first against Johnson. People would say that I was splitting the party out of ambition and envy. No one would believe that I was doing it because of how I felt about Vietnam and poor people."

Or Newfield noticing, as he sat next to Kennedy on a plane, that his eyes skipped over newspaper articles about his brother's assassination. ("All of November is a bad month for him," a friend says, and Kennedy's lack of interest in any of the Warren Commission exposés suddenly seems plausible.)

Or Kennedy in a crowd, stopping suddenly to talk to a little girl wearing glasses. "'You know something?' he blurted out, 'My little girl has glasses just like yours. And I love my little girl very much.' Then he squeezed the back of the girl's neck, because he was better expressing affection through action than words."

Or his reply to Newfield's question on what he might have become had he not been born a Kennedy: "Perhaps a juvenile delinquent or a revolutionary." ("The young especially," Newfield remarks, "saw in him, the qualities they most easily identified with—youth, dissent, authenticity, alienation, even inarticulateness . . . the same incongruous combination of toughness, humor, and sensitivity they saw in other generational cult figures like Belmondo, Dylan, and Bogart.")

Newfield's forthright personal involvement with Kennedy puts this book more in the tradition of English memoirs, and less in that of American journalistic biographies. Given the controversy surrounding this Kennedy, perhaps more than any other, the personal view is a good thing. So-called objective journalists—even some very good ones, like William Shannon in *The Heir Apparent*—have seemed more preoccupied with proving their objectivity than with telling us who Robert Kennedy was. Thus his early involvement with Joe McCarthy is juxtaposed darkly with his later civil rights activity as if to say, "See how I'm not being taken in by a glamorous Kennedy"; but we are never told how he got from one to the other.

Jack Newfield tries hard to convey Kennedy's capacity for growth and change—not an easy thing, since his changes flowed from action, instinct, and experience: a non-theoretical mode that Newfield has dubbed "sensual politics"—but he is successful because he was there. He tells us that Kennedy arrived at his poor white-black coalition, for instance, not through theory or logic, but through empathizing with the needs of both; through discovering that they both had the same emotional reaction to him. We believe him, because he saw it.

A fault of the book is that Newfield doesn't trace this "sensual politics" back far enough. Having disliked Robert Kennedy from afar during his brother's Administration, Newfield assumes that Jack Kennedy's death was "the classic identity crisis most of us go through during adolescence." For the Robert Kennedy who existed before that, Newfield is willing to accept most of the media clichés.

Though I began to re-evaluate Kennedy no earlier than Newfield, and was just as disapproving of him before 1963, there is probably evidence to prove us both partly wrong. Kennedy was, for instance, the advisor most in favor of appointing Stevenson supporters to high posts in his brother's Ad-

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Walinsky were as influential in their radicalism as Newfield says, why were they so "mysteriously" absent from all discussions on whether or not Kennedy should run in New Hampshire?

And the book contains two inaccuracies. Senator McGovern, not Senators Morse and Gruening, made the first major speech against Vietnam; at least, that's what Robert Kennedy himself believed. (In 1963 in his maiden speech on the Senate floor, with his friend JFK still in the White House, McGovern predicted that "the trap we have fallen into [in Vietnam] will haunt us in every corner of the revolutionary globe"; and he added that money now spent on the military must be utilized in cities. The speech is almost a cruel joke to read six years later.)

Newfield also makes the popular assumption that Chester Bowles was exiled to India for being "right" about Vietnam and for publicly criticizing the Bay of Pigs. In fact, President Kennedy and Bowles had been extensively incompatible since the convention, and the State Department had taken advantage of this to do a hatchet job on Bowles for his reforming tendencies.

But I hope there will be more printings, more editions. Though not as well written as David Halberstam's, Newfield's book has more facts: a detailed explanation, for instance, of New York's Bedford-Stuyvesant project. It is the best combination of information and understanding so far.

ministration, and not "punishing" them. "As Attorney General," Newfield writes, "Kennedy was not a partisan of the civil rights movement during its early Southern and integrationist days." Perhaps not as partisan as some of us hoped. But, from the day he saw Negroes attacked by police dogs ("sensual politics" again), Kennedy was the man in that Administration most responsible for pushing civil rights as a moral issue on his cooler, less Puritanical brother.

In *The Next Kennedy* by Margaret Laing, an English writer whose book was outdated by Kennedy's Presidential campaign, and was never widely reviewed, the "sensual politics" theory is carried back further. Miss Laing documents at least two "sensual" events that occurred between the time that RFK was assisting Joe McCarthy (diamond-in-the-rough friend of Joe Kennedy, Sr., and the godfather of Bobby and Ethel's first child) and Kennedy's later tolerance toward what J. Edgar Hoover termed "subversives": First, his instant dislike for the persona and methods of Roy Cohn. (They got into a fist fight in the hall outside the Army-McCarthy hearings.) And, second, a trip he took at the age of twenty-nine (just after working for McCarthy) through Asia and the Soviet Union with Supreme Court Justice Douglas. Not only did Kennedy discover that the trees weren't Communist trees, but when he became very ill a Communist doctor stayed up three days and nights to save his life.

However, these events are only earlier proofs of the man Newfield picks up after Jack Kennedy's death; the first three chapters of his book, devoted to Robert Kennedy's character, are still convincing.

The next chapters on Kennedy's politics are somewhat less convincing, especially the occasional forcing of his views into currently correct positions of a radical consciousness and/or the New Left. (It is often mentioned as a positive virtue, for instance, that Kennedy skipped the dreaded stage of liberalism, and actually disliked liberals.) The book does not provide enough documentation for Kennedy's belief that Eugene McCarthy would have been a poor President, or for his disdain of the Reform Democrats in New York. Newfield shares these feelings, as do I. For the sake of all three of us, I'm sorry he doesn't amplify McCarthy's voting record, or include his statements that "well-educated people support me," or elaborate on the self-devourings of some Reformers.

There is one riddle I would like cleared up in the next edition. If Kennedy aides Peter Edelman and Adam

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THE WARREN COURT:
A Critical Analysis

edited by Richard H. Sayler, Barry B. Boyer, and Robert E. Gooding, Jr.
Chelsea House, 262 pp., $7.95

EARL WARREN'S RETIREMENT as Chief Justice of the United States has occasioned a spate of books and articles on "the Warren Court." This one is a collection of ten articles originally published in the December 1968 issue of the *Michigan Law Review* (of which Richard Sayler, Barry Boyer, and Robert Gooding were the principal editors), to which have been added a preface by Leon Friedman of Chelsea House, an essay by Anthony Lewis of *The New York Times* on Earl Warren himself, and an appendix containing the Court's decisions in the three cases Warren considers to have been the most significant during his tenure.

Is—or has there been—such a thing as "the Warren Court"? If so, what is it? If the phrase is taken to signify nothing more than the period comprising Warren's years in office, of course the answer to the first question is easy and affirmative, and the second calls for a description of the work and impact of the Court as an institution since 1953, when Warren took the oath. That is the approach taken by the former Solicitor-General, Archibald Cox, in his book, also called *The Warren Court*, published last year.

But as commonly used "the Warren Court" surely signifies more than chronology. We do not refer to "the Vinson Court" or "the Stone Court." We do not even speak of "the Hughes Court," despite the great intellectual and political eminence of Charles Evans Hughes and the exciting events that took place in and around the Court while he was Chief Justice. Indeed, if one were to use such an expression, one would have to say that there were at least two "Hughes Courts," for certainly the "nine old men" of the early Thirties were quite different from the Court at the time of Hughes's resignation in 1941, with its six Roosevelt appointees including Black, Frankfurter, Douglas, and Murphy. But we do speak of a "Warren Court," and this book goes far toward telling us why.

Of the eleven essays included here, eight are by law professors, two by journalists who have specialized in reporting the Court's doings, and one by a practicing lawyer. Seven examine particular areas of judicial decision-making: reapportionment of electoral districts, racial desegregation, criminal procedure, church-state questions, free-

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Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by David M. Glixon

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF GROWN-UPS

It's no surprise that some of the best-known verses for children—or adopted by children—were written by some of the best-known poets. Myra DeChaine of Claremont, Calif., wonders how many you can place. The nursery library is on page 40.

1. There was a little turtle./He lived in a box. ( )
2. There was a little girl/Who had a little curl
Right in the middle of her forehead. ( )
3. The green bug sleeps in the white lily ear.
The red bug sleeps in the white magnolia. ( )
4. What does little birdie say
In her nest at peep of day? ( )
5. Who has seen the wind?/Neither you nor I. ( )
6. Sea Shell, Sea Shell,
Sing me a song, oh, please! ( )
7. He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small. ( )
8. Be kind and tender to the Frog,
And do not call him names. ( )
9. Sound the flute!/Now 'tis mute. ( )
10. Three jolly gentlemen,/In coats of red,
Rode their horses/Up to bed. ( )

a. Hilaire Belloc
b. William Blake
c. S. T. Coleridge
d. Walter de la Mare
e. Vachel Lindsay
f. H. W. Longfellow
g. Amy Lowell
h. Christina Rossetti
i. Carl Sandburg
j. Alfred Tennyson