



The Wallace Bid to Kennedy

EMK (A)

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IT SEEMS just a mite unlikely. But it is still a fact that Senator Edward Kennedy is seriously considering going to Decatur, Alabama, next July 4, to appear on the same platform with Governor George C. Wallace.

That is not all, either. The occasion is called "Spirit of America Day" in Decatur, and an award is given to someone held to embody the American spirit. This year's award-winner will be Governor Wallace.

The invitation to Senator Kennedy was in fact transmitted by Billy Joe Camp, a leading member of the Wallace staff. And the only question is how far Senator Kennedy wants to go in "getting the party together again," as he has been heard to describe the Democrats' main problem.

For the hero of the hard hats and southern Democrats to sponsor an invitation to Kennedy — and to a ceremony honoring himself, as well — would seem to be a fairly extreme step for Governor Wallace to take. For Senator Kennedy to accept the invitation, which he is still mulling over, would seem to be a fairly extreme step for the last remaining hero of the young, the black and the poor.

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GOVERNOR Wallace's motive is obvious enough. If he recovers his health, as he is determined to do, he means to seek the Democratic presidential nomination. Remembering his triumph in the Michigan primary last year, Wallace even thinks he may defeat all rivals. Hence he wants to be a "national Democrat," as they say in the south.

As these words are written, in turn, Senator Kennedy is giving serious consideration to doing honor to Governor Wallace, because of that nagging problem of

"getting the party together again." Unlike most of our more progressive thinkers, to begin with, Kennedy is able to count, and not be afraid to do so when necessary.

This means that the central fact of our new political geography has not escaped the senator's attention. He knows that any democratic presidential nominee will start with two strikes against him, if his mere nomination automatically concedes 147 southern electoral votes to the Republicans.

There are also a whole series of signs, both big and little, that Senator Kennedy is more and more inclined to think that the right way to "get the party together again" may well be himself. He has cut his hair, for instance, to a degree most surprising in anyone mainly concerned with the impression he makes on what is called the youth-culture. It is a tiny pointer, yet indicative.

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FAR MORE important, Kennedy is not going to appear in the forefront of the partisan attack on President Nixon. He has said as much in a couple of speeches, and he means to stick to it. He is even a bit hesitant about joining the other democratic liberals in an assault on the country's foreign policy and national defense.

The signs mean that Kennedy is at last leaning toward actively seeking the democratic presidential nomination. They also mean that he will not do this as an ultra-liberal.

Meanwhile, the mere fact that Kennedy's answer to Governor Wallace has been somewhat delayed, also reveals his painful but central dilemma. He cannot honor Wallace, or do a lot of other things he may need to do, in truth, without deeply offending large numbers of his present admirers.