



Tom Braden

RFK Estate to Be Sued for Bills

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A SUIT for \$416,000 against the estate of Robert F. Kennedy for bills incurred during the former senator's 1968 campaign will be filed this week in a New York court by American Airlines.

"We assume they have the money somewhere," said Gene E. Overbrook, American's vice president and general counsel. "We can't write this off because it would be a political contribution. That's against the law."

Overbrook has told Stephen Smith, Kennedy's brother-in-law and manager of his 1968 effort, that "pressure from stockholders" made the suit necessary. "But Overbrook has also heard from former employees laid off for economy reasons. "They complained," he told this reporter, "that if the company was in such a bind it had to lay off its people, it should collect its overdue accounts."

The stockholder pressure, according to Overbrook, came from Republican and "archconservatives." For three years, he said, he has been telling complaining stockholders that the Republican National Committee owed more than \$150,000 and Richard M. Nixon

nearly \$70,000. But when Republican bills were cleaned up recently, this excuse, he explained, become obsolete.

A MERICAN'S SUIT against Kennedy is the second to be filed by the airline against 1968 presidential contenders. A suit against former Sen. Eugene McCarthy for past due bills of \$135,000 was first revealed in this space last week. The McCarthy suit also lists John M. Safer of Maryland and Stephen Quigley of Washington as liable for the debts. Safer, a sculptor, was a large contributor to McCarthy's 1968 campaign. Quigley is the former senator's brother-in-law.

American has not sued Sen Hubert Humphrey (D-Minn.) who still owes \$138,762 to American from his 1968 presidential race.

McCarthy's last finance director, Thomas McCoy of Washington, D.C., has advised McCarthy to make no public statement on the law suit. But McCoy told this reporter that he found it "peculiar" that American waited until the Republicans had paid their bill and that having decided to act, the company chose Kennedy and McCarthy as targets.

"First American decided not to sue a sitting President; then decided not to sue Hubert Humphrey who might be President," McCoy said. "I wonder why the company chose a dead man and a man without great political potential as its primary targets."

McCoy also called attention to American's proposed merger with Western Airlines. "This is a matter," McCoy said, "which will eventually be decided by whomever is President of the United States."

In answer to this criticism, the airline has explained the Republican debt was being constantly reduced, and that the Humphrey debt shows prospects of being paid when and if the Democratic National Committee can raise the money.

On the other hand, the airline said, the monthly bills sent to McCarthy over the last three years have been ignored. American has acknowledged in writing to the Kennedy estate the fact that the Democratic National Committee has assumed the Kennedy debt. "However," American's Overbrook explained, "there is no doubt that the Kennedy

estate is the prime obligator."

THERE APPEARS to be a discrepancy between Overbrook's statement that the Republican debt has been gradually reduced over three years and the information the airline provided Sen. Hugh Scott (R-Pa. last year. On July 23, Scott, in arguing for his bill to tighten supervision of campaign expenses, listed the Republican National Finance Committee as owing American Airlines \$133,284 in 1968 and \$151,871 in April of 1971 with no payments between those dates. Scott said his information was provided by American Airlines. Scott also said at that time that Richard M. Nixon owed American Airlines \$69,386 as of April, 1971, and had owed almost this amount for more than two years. Both these debts have now been paid.

If American is successful in its \$416,000 suit against the estate of Robert Kennedy, the money Kennedy left to his wife and 11 children will be almost wiped out.

Kennedy left his widow \$358,842 and each of his 11 children \$17,210.