

20 Feb. 72

W033

d czczzyyzyy 725

NY FOR PMS

Kennedy

By BILL STALL

AP Political Writer

LOS ANGELES AP - Sen. Edward M. Kennedy gazed out at the vast dinner audience and mused, "I've always dreamed of standing in front of thousands of Democrats in a crowded convention hall." The crowd laughed at the joking reference to the Democratic National Convention cheering its nominee, knowing the senator from Massachusetts has declared himself out of the 1972 presidential race.

Yet, on Saturday night, Kennedy drew one of the biggest political fund-raising dinner crowds in California in recent years. An estimated 3,000 paid \$12 each for a meatless dinner of tepid Mexican-American food at the new Los Angeles Convention Center and to hear the young senator.

The proceeds went to the state party treasury, not to any candidate's campaign.

The turnout and the warm reception indicated the depth of Kennedy family political sentiment that remains in California.

There was a smattering of green buttons reading "EMK in 1972" and the crowd mobbed Kennedy to shake his hand and get his autograph when he ventured onto the convention hall floor before dinner.

It was in Los Angeles in 1960 that Sen. John F. Kennedy was nominated for president. And it was in Los Angeles in 1968, at a hotel about two miles away, that Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was fatally shot just after a California primary victory that might have propelled him to the presidential nomination.

Saturday night's address by the youngest Kennedy brother sounded like a presidential campaign speech as he attacked a Republican administration on a broad spectrum of issues.

In familiar Kennedy style, his pointed finger jabbed the air, his jaw jutted up and out and the voice rose in pitch:

"We search for peace and all we find is war.

"We search for equal justice and all we find is special privileges.

"We search for excellence and all we find is mediocrity."

The California Democrats applauded 20 times during the half-hour speech, including Kennedy's single reference to the two assassinated brothers: "We can build the kind of society we want, the kind President Kennedy worked for—the kind Robert Kennedy dreamed of when he asked us to seek a newer world."

But as of now, this Kennedy was not a presidential candidate and was not taking sides in the fight shaping up in California's June 6 primary campaign.

Most California political figures have endorsed one of the declared candidates, including Kennedy's close friend, Sen. John V. Tunney who is supporting Sen. Edmund S. Muskie after saying he was convinced Kennedy wouldn't be a candidate this year.

But at least two prominent party figures who supported John and Robert Kennedy remain uncommitted this year—former Assembly Speaker Jess Unruh, who may run for mayor of Los Angeles next year, and National Committeewoman Carmen Warschaw.