

## Teddy for President



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**T**HERE is a vivid expression widely used by politicians to describe the plight in which they frequently find themselves: "between a rock and a hard place."

It is perfectly extraordinary how many of our noblest statesmen spend their lives wedged in that ungainly posture.

Take Teddy Kennedy for example. I dismiss as not worthy of serious consideration the proposition that he truly doesn't want to be President. Of course he does. Both of his brothers certainly did, and he himself admits to toying with the idea.

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**L**ET US, then agree that Teddy would be delighted to move into the White House if he could only figure out how. His problems are well-known and not unprecedented: 1) his own disadvantages, and 2) the strength of the opposition.

In Teddy's case, the disadvantages boil down to one: Chappaquiddick. Nobody I have ever met doubts there is more to that story than has yet seen the light of day. And if so, it can only be a matter of time until one or more of the girls present on that famous occasion decides to publish her memoirs.

Even if all the girls can be persuaded to keep quiet, there have been recent indications that the parents of Mary Jo Kopechne are less than wholly satisfied with Kennedy's version of the tragedy. And, in any

case, there is simply no chance that Kennedy could run successfully for the presidency while his testimony at the coroner's inquest remains undisclosed. That is his "rock." Now for the "hard place."

Normally there would be a lot to be said, from Kennedy's own strategic standpoint, for running for President in 1976 and forcing the whole Chappaquiddick mess into the open: Let the inquest testimony be released; let the girls publish their memoirs; let Teddy, if it comes to that, lose. He would be only 44 on election night, with anywhere from 15 to 20 years still ahead of him in which to pursue his ambition to be President. Even Chappaquiddick, however fatal to his candidacy, is only a one-shot cannon.

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**O**NCE the truth is out at last, Chappaquiddick must lose its destructive power. In 1980 Kennedy, with the scandal four years old and himself only 48 could presumably run again, shriven and whole.

The trouble with that is that, by sheer rotten luck, Kennedy's Senate seat comes up in 1976. He must, therefore, either seek and win the presidency next year, or lose it and simultaneously sacrifice his priceless springboard: the Senate.

So, if Kennedy gambles on running for President and loses in 1976, he would probably have to make a 1980 bid after four years as a mere private citizen. That, you see, is Teddy Kennedy's "hard place."