

**Our Fearless
Correspondent**

Will Bobby Split Demos?

Charles McCabe

THOUGHTFUL political observers (me, that is) are coming to think that young Bobby Kennedy is the worst thing to befall the Democratic Party since William Jennings Bryan was yammering about crucifying Mankind on a cross of gold, and getting creamed every time he ran for anything.



Like President. Bobby and his kindly boss, LBJ, are engaged in a power struggle for control of the party machinery that reminds one of nothing so much as a medieval Brannigan between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines in Italy with their rival claims for the papcy and the

German emperors. These two boys play for keeps. They know the rules and they know when to throw away the rule book. When they are finished with each other one of them is gonna be dead. And maybe both. Each of these lads is pure, naked thrust. They are each mortally afraid of the other, and they have reason. There is an ancient Yankee political motto which says, "Never get involved in a hissing contest between skunks." Doubtless both contestants in this fierce power fight have heard it. Perhaps, too, they have heard Napoleon's advice never to interfere with an enemy who is destroying himself. (This is good advice, even if Napoleon did say it.)

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ALREADY, well before the 1968 election, friends of the parties are beginning to talk rough. U.S. News and World Report recently quoted one of

LBJ's associates, in what may be close to the official White House view of the Kennedy family's political aspirations:

"The entire post-assassination series of events has been a calculated, contrived, emotional build-up, not for the sake of paying honest respect to, and showing genuine grief for, John F. Kennedy, but to enhance the image of the Kennedy family and the Kennedy name.

"The Kennedys have the attitude that this is not an honor that the American people conferred on Jack Kennedy, but that the Kennedy family as a whole achieved a position of power in American society — and the important thing is to retain that position, for which the family fought so long, starting with Joe Kennedy."

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BOBBY KENNEDY is riding (whether for a fall, or for the big chair in the White House remains to be seen) on the coattails of a legend, the legend a grief-stricken people erected over the death of his brother. Camelot, it's called.

Camelot is almost the complete stock in trade of the Kennedy family. When anything comes up that threatens to diminish it, or to tarnish the myth with reality, the tribe bands together like Kilkenny cats to defend the dream.

This, and not any wicked remarks about the conduct of LBJ at the time of the assassination, is what aroused the feline in the widow Kennedy and moved her to the ill-advised action of trying to bowdlerize or ban altogether a book she herself had commissioned to support the legend.

When her literary eunuch, Mr. William Manchester, began to show some disturbing signs of manhood by reporting certain facts that were not in accord with the family canon of beatification leading to sainthood for JFK, he got the full power of the family wrath, and ended up in a sanitorium.

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AS OF THIS writing I see nothing which will prevent Bobby and LBJ, in the pursuit of their separate and similar ambitions, from destroying the Democratic party as an effective tool of victory in 1972, and maybe in 1968.

Not that this might not be a good thing. I could do without either of the contesting Democratic worthies in the White House. After all, the Republicans haven't had a president since Herbert Hoover, unless you count old Ike, and who does?