

# How Bobby Won Them Over

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NEW YORK, July 9 — Maybe what's needed is a book done in the manner of the childhood epics of yesteryear that had titles like "The Radio Boys in the Rockies."

This one could be called "Bob Kennedy in the Empire State." It would tell the story of how this Massachusetts boy came to New York and had a rough time of it for a while from people who didn't like him and resented him.

It would describe how he worked hard, used his wits, and in time overcame a reputation for being a mean, ruthless fellow of dubious sportsmanship and emerged as the school hero regarded by everybody (well practically everybody) as an all round swell guy.

THE STORY wouldn't be too far off the mark.

Sen. Robert F. Kennedy has, in a space of less than two years, almost completely won over an important and highly influential segment of New York Democrats who never liked any of the Kennedys very much and liked him least of all.

These are the liberal, so-called Reform Democrats, a breed which far outnumbers the formerly organized reform movement in the city and which, while centered in Manhattan, extends deep into the suburbs and in scattered pockets all around the state.

It is a highly independent voting bloc. Its size cannot



be measured with any precision. But in a state which is 4-3 Democratic in registration its independence and power is reflected in the substantial pluralities by which the Republicans have kept the governorship for all but four of the last 24 years.

THE MOST recent manifestation of its power in the city (about 3-1 Democratic) was John V. Lindsay's election as mayor last November. Republican Sen. Jacob J. Javits has been a happy beneficiary of its favors for years. And while Kennedy was an easy winner over Kenneth B. Keating in the 1964 senatorial race, his margin of victory was 1.75 million votes short of the margin by which President Johnson defeated Barry Goldwater.

Obviously there were a lot of Republican votes in that 1.75 million. But based on analysis of other elections in the past decade it would be fair to guess that at least half represented Democrats — liberal Democrats who preferred Keating to Kennedy.

BUT THAT was two years ago. The popular Keating — elected to the state court of appeals last fall by a fantastic 2 million plurality — would never fare that well again.

WHEN A FEW months later Robert Kennedy decided

issues dear to the reformers. Viet Nam is one, civil rights another. Most recently, in a move which shattered the last vestige of reform resistance to him, it was the issue of court reform as applied to the Manhattan surrogate primary fight.

ENTERING AN intraparty fight for the first time since coming here, Kennedy allied himself with the reform movement against Tammany Hall. One result: a thumping defeat for the machine and a personal triumph for the senator that is still reverberating around the state.

Another result: A new sense of fraternity between Kennedy and the reform movement and a new role for the senator as hero to the great mass of reformers themselves.

It is doubtful that anyone savors the irony of this more than Kennedy. It is also doubtful that anyone is more aware of how it will smooth his path in the future, a path that at the moment seems to point all the way to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. If Kennedy can put together a coalition of eternally warring Reform and regular Democrats in New York, as he has done with amazing dispatch, he can put together a winning coalition nationwide. From this vantage point the only question that remains is: when does he want to do it?

Why?

The answer calls for a close look at both Kennedy and the reformers. Both are complicated and both are interesting political phenomena.



ROBERT KENNEDY  
Charmed the Reformers

deception in this. Their distaste for the President is a pure East Coast snobbery reacting in horror to everything about the man from his accent to his tailoring. More to the point, they have nourished a prejudice against the Kennedy clan ever since Joseph P. Kennedy won their disfavor as ambassador to Britain in World War II.

THE AMBASSADOR'S judgment that Britain was doomed to go down under the Nazi horde was the surface reason given for his unpopularity with the liberal Democrats. But there was more to it than that. Joe Kennedy was also viewed as a Boston Irish

tough, a parvenue and a climber. Later on his villainy took on even more appalling dimensions when it became clear that he was going to "buy" the presidency for his son and ride roughshod over Adlai E. Stevenson in the process.

Anti - Kennedy sentiment was not greatly diminished by the election of John F. Kennedy to the White House in 1960. John Kennedy's style appealed to the New York reformers, his humor pleased them almost in spite of themselves, the handsomeness of his family could not be denied and one had to admit how gratifying it was to have people who looked like that as the first family after so many years of Truman and Eisenhower.

BUT THE picture was not all perfect. There was the Bay of Pigs, there were those persistent rumors that Stevenson was being eased out of his post at the United Nations, Old Joe Kennedy was still around exerting influence and then there was Bobby. Ruthless Bobby who had had the affrontery to interrupt an explanation of the reform movement by Herbert Lehman in 1960 with: "I'm not interested in that, senator. All I care about is getting my brother elected President."

Even Dallas didn't change the attitude toward the younger Kennedy although the death of the President was deeply and genuinely mourned.

## SLEEPING SHIPS

ly confirmed every previously held conviction about him.

What about Kennedy himself meanwhile? What has he done to break down this deep-seated and enduring animosity? How has he managed to shed the "ruthless and mean" image which he now, by his own droll admission, has turned over to his brother-in-law Steven Smith?

Those who know him well say that he has done it by being himself. This is not to say that it was done without calculation. Kennedy is a political man and all political men are calculating. But it is to say that without compromising his own attitude on specific issues he has the wit to put his personal stamp on

crats are a high-minded, snobbish, dogmatically liberal and pietistic lot whose virtues far outweigh their shortcomings. They are altruistic in their approach to government, tending to put what they deem to be civic responsibility above the desire to dodge the slings and arrows of outrageous taxation.

**THEY ARE** pro welfare state, pro civil rights and pro internationalist as regards foreign policy. They don't approve of Lyndon Johnson's Viet Nam policy and, while they are with him on most other issues, they don't really approve of Johnson himself.

They pride themselves on being free of prejudice but there is a good deal of self-

tively few steaming hours, and we know our preservation methods are technically sound.

"The worth of inventory was proved in Korea, proved again in the Berlin crisis, in the Cuban crisis and is being proved today in Viet Nam. In summary, here is a source of ships that we can get quickly and relatively inexpensively.

"When you consider the tremendous investment that the United States has in a ship, and the relatively small cost to maintain these ships in an inactive status, we feel we are paying a low premium on a good insurance policy."

**SOME PEOPLE** like to

think ships have memories.

If so, one that was pulled out of the reserve for Korea, the Meredith Victory, can look back on the time it took on board 14,000 Korean refugees and carried them jam-packed on a three-day voyage to safety through enemy minefields. And this was a cargo ship with quarters for 50 men!

And there is the Zebulon B. Vance. Launched on Pearl Harbor day, the Vance lived through the war as a cargo ship and later as a hospital ship. At the end, the duty was uniquely joyous:

Bringing war brides to the United States.