

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

New sex scandal aimed at Kennedy machine

A new sex scandal involving the Kennedy family is being widely trumpeted by the mass media. The intensity and timing of the media barrage has prompted Washington observers to suspect that the campaign is aimed at demolishing what is left of the Kennedy political machine.

A nephew of Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) was accused of rape by a 29-year-old woman on March 31, who claimed she was visiting the Kennedy Palm Beach bungalow at the time of the incident, which is said to have occurred on March 30. Allegations are flying that Senator Kennedy and his son Patrick were at the bungalow at the time of the alleged rape.

The rape accusations occur one month before the publication of a new biography on John F. Kennedy by Thomas S. Reeves entitled *A Question of Character*, a book which is said to contain lurid details of the late President's extramarital activities. The book is aimed at debunking what the author calls "our national desire for heroes."

The nephew, William Kennedy Smith, is a medical student at Georgetown University and the son of Stephen Smith, the campaign manager for Senator Kennedy's 1980 presidential campaign and controller of the Kennedy family money. The death of the elder Smith from cancer last year was considered a blow to the Kennedy political machine.

Although the senator is no longer mooted as a serious presidential contender, the Kennedy machine is a stumbling block to Bush's policies. The senator was an opponent of Bush's Gulf war, as was his nephew, Rep. Joseph Kennedy III (D-Mass.), the son of the murdered Robert F. Kennedy. As a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, the senator op-

posed to the proposed Bush crime bill, a measure which is a step toward police-state rule in the U.S. The Kennedy machine has also balked at cuts in social programs which are integral to Bush's austerity policies.

Heinz death may clear way for Thornburgh bid

Sen. John Heinz (R-Pa.) was killed in a plane crash on April 4 when his chartered plane collided with a helicopter inspecting the plane's landing gear. The collision occurred after the senator's plane reported a problem and the helicopter offered to fly nearby to see whether the gear was down for a landing.

According to *USA Today*, Heinz had one of the highest anti-Bush voting records among Republicans, and harbored presidential ambitions. It was not stated whether he planned to challenge Bush for the nomination.

Heinz was also a proponent of an expansion of the U.S. rail system, and, in particular, of the introduction of maglev technology into the United States. An experimental project with magnetically levitated trains was to be set up between the Pittsburgh airport and downtown Pittsburgh, later to be expanded as the basis of a regional maglev system going to Cleveland and other parts of the Midwest. The maglev project involved collaboration between Westinghouse, USX, and the German firm AEG. Heinz succeeded in getting money for the project out of the Highway Trust Fund surplus. The project was intended to make Pittsburgh again a major industrial production center.

The death of Heinz has set off speculation that Attorney General Richard Thornburgh, the former governor of Pennsylvania, might run hop-

ing to use the Senate seat as a springboard for a presidential bid in 1996. One Washington observer commented that a Thornburgh bid for the Senate would be like a "900-pound gorilla entering the race," i.e., he would be sure to win.

Pennsylvania Gov. Bob Casey (D) may appoint former Secretary of Transportation Drew Lewis to the post. Sources also indicate that Rep. William Gray (D-Pa.) may also be interested in the seat.

In what appears to be a bizarre coincidence the day following the Heinz crash, former Texas Sen. John Tower (R) also died in a plane crash in Georgia. Tower was the head of the Tower Commission which whitewashed the role of Bush in the Iran-Contra scandal. Tower's death occurs at a point at which the Iran-Contra scandal has threatened to resurface. The reasons for the plane crash are still being investigated.

Charges dropped against Rep. Flake

Charges of conspiracy, fraud, and tax evasion have been dropped against Rep. Floyd Flake (D-N.Y.) due to lack of evidence.

Representative Flake and his wife Margaret were facing a 17-count indictment, which charged that Flake had stolen \$75,000 in Housing and Urban Development funds between 1983 and 1987 by billing the apartment complex which they developed for transportation expenses which were supposedly provided by a fund at their church, and pocketing the payments. Flake is the pastor of the Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church.

U.S. District Judge Eugene H. Nickerson ruled that the church fund was valid for the Flakes to use, and

noted that all churches are exempt from paying taxes. Therefore, he ruled, no tax liability or accusation of embezzlement could be attached to any money in that fund.

The ruling has undermined what was considered a weak case to begin with. Flake is one of numerous black officials who are being targeted by the Justice Department on a variety of fraud and conspiracy charges, in a pattern of selective prosecution. Members of his district considered Flake to be the victim of a witchhunt. Flake was easily reelected in November to his House seat.

Bush urged to shoot down Iraqi helicopters

An unholy alliance of conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats is putting pressure on the Bush administration to give military aid, particularly air support, to the Kurdish uprising against the Iraqi government. Some are urging support for the British-French proposal for a Kurdish enclave under U.N. auspices in northern Iraq.

Interviewed on the McNeil-Lehrer News Hour on April 9, Rep. Bob McEwen (R-Ohio) warned that the administration had been "going downhill when we pulled the plug on Schwarzkopf." McEwen was referring to Schwarzkopf's reported desire to take U.S. troops all the way to Baghdad in order to remove Saddam Hussein. McEwen urged that U.S. air power be used to shoot down helicopters which were allegedly attacking Kurdish civilians. Bush should tell Saddam Hussein, said McEwen, "Park your helicopters. Read my lips."

House Armed Services Committee chairman Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wis.), also interviewed on McNeil-

Lehrer, agreed with McEwen, but warned that such action could resurrect the war. Aspin called for autonomy for the Kurds rather than independence, and mooted the possibility that an even more brutal leader could seize power in Iraq if the U.S. eliminated Saddam Hussein.

Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), a sycophant of the Bush regime, gave his support to the proposal of British Prime Minister John Major for the creation of a U.N. enclave for the Kurds in northern Iraq. Not to be outdone by the Bushmen, likely 1992 Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Al Gore (D-Tenn.) stressed that the enclave idea must be thought through and must be "deep enough to encompass some towns." The U.S., according to Gore, must also give a "hands-off to Saddam Hussein" in order to launch a successful relief effort.

The British proposal would be a gross violation of national sovereignty, and a violation of the U.N. Charter itself.

House committee gives okay to Bush budget

The House Budget Committee approved with little opposition on a voice vote on April 9, a \$1.45 trillion government spending plan that makes little more than cosmetic changes in the Bush budget proposal.

Although accepting the austerity guidelines laid out in last year's budget agreement, some minor changes could cause a great deal of political infighting.

The House proposal rejects the President's proposed \$25 billion cuts in Medicare, and increases the funds for rural programs by \$704 million over the administration's proposal. However, the committee also urges

other committees to "explore" proposals to eliminate farm subsidies for growers who earn more than \$125,000 a year in non-farm income, and to triple the out-of-pocket costs of Medicare beneficiaries making over \$125,000 a year. The bill also adds marginal funds to most of the other entitlement programs.

The House budget, in keeping with the guidelines of last year's budget hoax, cuts funds for programs such as space exploration and the Superconducting Super Collider.

Gulf war having little impact on election races

In spite of a major flag-waving campaign by the Republican National Committee targeting anti-war congressmen, the issue of the Persian Gulf war seems to be of little influence on reelection races, as economic concerns, highlighted by high unemployment figures, are more prevalent.

Some of the key anti-war Senators, Terry Sanford (D-N.C.), Ernest Hollings (D-S.C.), and Wyche Fowler (D-Ga.), all from Southern states which are traditionally pro-military, are not getting a backlash because of their vote against committing U.S. troops to the Gulf war. None of them have become defensive about their vote.

"I'm proud of the way I voted," said Sanford, "and I'm proud I thought there was another way. . . . I think history will say this is a war that didn't need to be fought."

A recent survey by Stanley Greenberg, a Democrat, and Frederick Steeper, a Republican, found that 52% of the voters said that that one vote would make no difference in who they elected to Congress. Greenberg noted that people generally "don't want to see [the war] politicized."