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### Kennedy Hits Press For Religious Issue

WASHINGTON ---(BP)--- A major responsibility for the intensity of the "religious issue" in the current political campaign was laid at the feet of the public press by Sen. John F. Kennedy (D., Mass.) in a speech here.

Speaking before the 1960 convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Kennedy, a Roman Catholic and a candidate for the Democratic nomination for the Presidency, charged that the press had magnified a minor question into a major issue. He said that the press is not to be blamed for printing the news, but that it has a responsibility in the presentation and interpretation of the news.

In reporting the Wisconsin campaign, Kennedy charged, the press continually gave major space to irrelevant questions about his religion while in many instances his discussions of the major issues of the day before the American people got scarcely any attention. It is the responsibility of the press, he said, to keep the issues in proper perspective.

Using as his subject, "Religion and Politics," he declared that there is no religious issue in the current campaign in view of the voting records of the various candidates for the Presidency. He said that all of the candidates are dedicated to the separation of church and state and that no candidate is exploiting his religion.

"I want no vote solely on account of my religion," he continued, "and if any Catholic thinks that another candidate is better qualified to be Chief Executive than I am he should get his vote." Neither did he want a vote because of the insinuation that to vote against him would appear to be bigoted.

Kennedy acknowledged that there had been a shift in public attitude away from him in West Virginia because of the religious issue. Pointing to the newspapers, he wondered about the explanation. He said that the questions were no different, that the public knew all along that he is a Catholic, and that he had answered all of the questions that had been put to him before the West Virginia campaign. He clearly implied that the shift in public opinion had been a result of the overplay by the newspapers on the religious issue.

In reply to the oft-repeated question as to whether he would be responsible to outside ecclesiastical authorities in the performance of his public duties as President, Kennedy said the answer is "No!" He emphasized that his personal religious practices would not affect his administration of public policies.

He denied that birth control and foreign aid would likely become national issues in the near future, but he said that Federal aid to parochial schools and an ambassador to the Vatican are national issues. He then said that he was the only candidate for president who voted against aid to parochial schools in the recent Senate education bill, and he reminded the editors that he was opposed to an ambassador to the Vatican but that a Baptist president had nominated one.

Kennedy asked why the religious issue is being raised in the presidential campaign, since it was not raised in any of his campaigns for the House of Representatives or for the Senate. He pointed out that many Catholics had served in many capacities in key governmental positions both in the States and in the Nation.

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He said that the Catholic church is not a monolithic structure and that in the United States it is dedicated to religious liberty and individual freedom.

Kennedy closed his speech with a strong appeal to the constitutional principle that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States." He said that, "we must all dedicate ourselves to this principle for it is the key to a free government."

Following his speech opportunity was given to the 500 or 600 editors from newspapers throughout the nation to ask questions. A deadly silence followed and not a single question was asked. Some interpreted this as meaning that Kennedy had effectively answered all the pertinent questions, while others said that it was the "silent treatment" the editors were giving him in return for his severe reprimand of the public press.

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Text of Kennedy speech before American Society of Newspaper Editors:

I have decided, in view of current press reports, that it would be appropriate to speak with you today about what has widely been called "the religious issue" in American politics.

The phrase covers a multitude of meanings. There is no religious issue in the sense that any of the major candidates differ on the role of religion in our political life. Every presidential contender, I am certain, is dedicated to the separation of church and state, to the preservation of religious liberty, to an end to religious bigotry and to the total independence of the office-holder from any form of ecclesiastical dictation.

Nor is there any real issue in the sense that any candidate is exploiting his religious affiliation. No one's candidacy, by itself, raises a religious issue.

And I believe it is inaccurate to state that my "candidacy created the issue"--that, because I am replying to the bigots, I am "running on the religious issue in West Virginia"--or that my statements in response to interrogation are "fanning the controversy."

I am not "trying to be the first Catholic President," as some have written. I happen to believe I can serve my Nation as President--and I also happen to have been born a Catholic.

Nor am I appealing, as is too often claimed, to a so-called Catholic vote. Even if such a vote exists--which I doubt--I want to make one thing clear again: I want no votes solely on account of my religion.

Any voter, Catholic or otherwise, who feels another candidate would be a superior President should support that candidate. I do not want any vote cast for me for such illogical reasons.

Neither do I want anyone to support my candidacy merely to prove that this Nation is not bigoted--and that a Catholic can be elected President. I have never suggested that those opposed to me are thereby anti-Catholic. There are ample legitimate grounds for supporting other candidates--(though I will not, of course, detail them here).

Nor have I ever suggested that the Democratic Party is required to nominate me or face a Catholic revolt in November. I do not believe that to be true--I cannot believe our convention would act on such a premise--and I do believe that a majority of Americans of every faith will support the Democratic nominee, whoever he is.

What Is the Issue?

What, then, is the so-called religious issue in American politics today? It is not, it seems to me, my actual religious convictions--but a misunderstanding of what those convictions actually are. It is not the actual existence of religious voting blocs--but a suspicion that such voting blocs may exist. And when we deal with such public fears and suspicions, the American press has a very grave responsibility.

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I know the press did not create this religious issue. My religious affiliation is a fact--religious intolerance is a fact. And the proper role of the press is to report all facts that are a matter of public interest.

But the press has a responsibility, I think you will agree, which goes far beyond a reporting of the facts. It goes beyond lofty editorials deploring intolerance.

For my religion is hardly, in this critical year of 1960, the dominant issue of our time. It is hardly the most important criterion--or even a relevant criterion--on which the American people should make their choice for Chief Executive.

And the press, while not creating the issue, will largely determine whether or not it does become dominant--whether it is kept in perspective--whether it is considered objectively--whether needless fears and suspicions are stilled instead of aroused.

The members of the press should report the facts as they find them. They should describe the issues as they see them. But they should beware, it seems to me, of either magnifying this issue or oversimplifying it. They should beware of ignoring the vital issues of this campaign, while filling their pages with analyses that cannot be proven, with statements that cannot be documented and with an emphasis which cannot be justified.

I spoke in Wisconsin, for example, on farm legislation, foreign policy, defense, civil rights and several dozen other issues. The people of Wisconsin seemed genuinely interested in these addresses. But I rarely found them reported in the press--except when they were occasionally sandwiched in between descriptions of my handshaking, my theme song, family, haircut and, inevitably, my religion.

#### Questions Were Asked

At almost every stop in Wisconsin I invited questions--and the questions came --on price supports, labor unions, disengagement, taxes and inflation. But these sessions were rarely reported in the press except when one topic was discussed-- religion. One article, for example, supposedly summing the primary up in advance, mentioned the word Catholic 20 times in 15 paragraphs--not mentioning even once dairy farms, disarmament, labor legislation or any other issue. And on the Sunday before the primary, the Milwaukee Journal featured a map of the State, listing county by county the relative strength of three types of votes--Democrats, Republicans and Catholics.

In West Virginia, it is the same story. As reported in yesterday's Washington Post, the great bulk of West Virginians paid very little attention to my religion--until they read repeatedly in the Nation's press that this was the decisive issue in West Virginia. There are many serious problems in that State--problems big enough to dominate any campaign--but religion is not one of them.

I do not think that religion is the decisive issue in any State. I do not think it should be. I do not think it should be made to be. And recognizing my own responsibilities in that regard, I am hopeful that you will recognize yours also.

For the past months and years, I have answered almost daily inquiries from the press about the religious issue. I want to take this opportunity to turn the tables--and to raise some questions for your thoughtful consideration.

First: Is the religious issue a legitimate issue in this campaign?

There is only one legitimate question underlying all the rest: Would you, as President of the United States, be responsive in any way to ecclesiastical pressures or obligations of any kind that might in any fashion influence or interfere with your conduct of that office in the national interest? I have answered that question many times. My answer was--and is--"No."

Once that question is answered, there is no legitimate issue of my religion. But there are, I think, legitimate questions of public policy--of concern to religious groups which no one should feel bigoted about raising, and to which I do not object answering. But I do object to being the only candidate required to answer those questions.

Federal assistance to parochial schools, for example, is a very legitimate issue actually before the Congress. I am opposed to it. I believe it is clearly

unconstitutional. I voted against it on the Senate floor this year, when offered by Senator Morse. But interestingly enough, I was the only announced candidate in the Senate who did so. (Nevertheless I have not yet charged my opponents with taking orders from Rome.)

An Ambassador to the Vatican could conceivably become a real issue again. I am opposed to it, and said so long ago. But even though it was last proposed by a Baptist President, I know of no other candidate who has been even asked about this matter.

The prospects of any President ever receiving for his signature a bill providing foreign aid funds for birth control are very remote indeed. It is hardly the major issue some have suggested. Nevertheless I have made it clear that I would neither veto nor sign such a bill on any basis except what I considered to be the public interest, without regard to my private religious views.

I have said the same about bills dealing with censorship, divorce, our relations with Spain or any other subject.

These are legitimate inquiries about real questions which the next President may conceivably have to face. But these inquiries ought to be directed equally to all candidates. I have made it clear that I strongly support--out of conviction as well as constitutional obligation--the guarantees of religious equality provided by the First Amendment--and I ask only that these same guarantees be extended to me.

Secondly: Can we justify analyzing voters as well as candidates strictly in terms of their religion?

I think the voters of Wisconsin objected to being categorized simply as either Catholics or Protestants in analyzing their political choices. I think they objected to being accosted by reporters outside of political meetings and asked one question only--their religion--not their occupation or education or philosophy or income--only their religion.

And I think they had a right to object. The flood of post-primary analyses on the so-called "Catholic vote" and "Protestant vote"--carefully shaped to conform with their authors' pre-primary predictions--would never be published in any competent statistical journal.

Only this week, I received a very careful analysis of the Wisconsin results. It conclusively shows two significant patterns of bloc voting: I ran strongest in those areas where the average temperature in January was 20 degrees or higher, and poorest in those areas where it was 14 degrees or lower--and that I ran well in the beech tree and basswood counties and not so well among the hemlock and pine.

Anyone who thinks these trends are merely coincidences of no relevance has never tried to campaign in Wisconsin in January. In any event, this analysis is being rushed to West Virginia, where I am assured that the winter is less severe and the basswood are abundant. It has been suggested, however, that to offset my apparent political handicaps I may have to pick a running mate from Maine, or preferably, Alaska.

#### Stand Up Statistically

The facts of the matter are that this analysis stands up statistically much better than all the so-called analyses of the religious vote. And so do analyses of each county based on their distance from the Minnesota border, the length of their Democratic tradition and their inclusion in my campaign itinerary. I carried some areas with large proportions of voters who are Catholics--and I lost some. I carried some areas where Protestants predominate--and I lost some.

It is true that I ran well in cities--and large numbers of Catholics live in cities. But so do union members and older voters and veterans and chess fans and basswood lovers. To say my support in the cities is due only to the religion of the voters is incapable of proof and an unfair indictment of their political maturity.

Of those Catholics who voted for me, how many did so on grounds of my religion--how many because they felt my opponent was too radical--how many because they resented the attacks on my record--how many because they were union

members--how many for some other reason? I do not know. And the facts are that no one knows.

For voters are more than Catholics, Protestants or Jews. They make up their minds for many diverse reasons, good and bad. To submit the candidates to a religious test is unfair enough--to apply it to the voters themselves is divisive, degrading and wholly unwarranted.

Third and finally: Is there any justification for applying special religious tests to one office only--the presidency?

Little or no attention was paid to my religion when I took the oath as Senator in 1953--as a Congressman in 1947--or as a Naval officer in 1941. Members of my faith abound in public office at every level except the White House. What is there about the presidency that justifies this constant emphasis upon a candidate's religion and that of his supporters.

The presidency is not, after all, the British Crown, serving a dual capacity in both church and state. The President is not elected to be protector of the faith--or guardian of the public morals. His attendance at church on Sunday should be his business alone, not a showcase for the Nation.

On the other hand, we are in no danger of a one-man Constitutional upheaval. The President, however intent he may be on subverting our institutions, cannot ignore the Congress--or the voters--or the courts. And our highest court, incidentally, has a long history of Catholic justices, none of whom, as far as I know, was ever challenged on the fairness of his rulings on sensitive church-state issues.

Some may say we treat the presidency differently because we have had only one previous Catholic candidate for President. But I am growing weary of that term. I am not the Catholic candidate for President. I do not speak for the Catholic church on issues of public policy--and no one in that church speaks for me.

My record on aid to education, aid to Tito, the Conant nomination and other issues has displeased some prominent Catholic clergymen and organizations; and it has been approved by others. The fact is that the Catholic church is not a monolith--it is committed in this country to the principles of individual liberty--and it has no claim over my conduct as a public officer sworn to do the public interest.

So I hope we can see the beginning of the end of references to me as "the Catholic candidate" for President. Do not expect me to explain or defend every act or statement of every Pope or priest, in this country or some other, in this century or the last--and that includes the Mayor of Dijon.

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I have tried to examine with you today the press' responsibility in meeting this religious issue. The question remains: What is my responsibility? I am a candidate. The issue is here. Two alternatives have been suggested:

1. The first suggestion is that I withdraw to avoid a "dangerous controversy;" and accept the vice presidential nomination in order to placate the so-called Catholic vote.

I find that suggestion highly distasteful. It assumes the worst about a country which prides itself on being more tolerant and better educated than it was in 1928. It assumes that Catholics are a pawn on the political chess board, moved hither and yon, and somehow "bought off" by the party putting in the second-spot a Catholic whom the party barred from the top. And it forgets, finally, that such a performance would have an effect on our image abroad as well as our self-respect here at home.

Are we going to admit to the world that a Jew can be elected Mayor of Dublin, a Protestant can be chosen Foreign Minister of France, a Moslem can serve in the Israeli Parliament--but a Catholic cannot be President of the United States?

Are we to tell Chancellor Adenauer, for example, that we want him risking his all on our front-lines; but that--if he were an American--we would never entrust him with our presidency--nor would we accept our distinguished guest, Gen. de Gaulle? Are we to admit to the world--worse still, are we to admit to ourselves--that one-third of our population is forever barred from the White House?

So I am not impressed by those pleas that I settle for the vice presidency in order to avert a religious spectacle. Surely those who believe it dangerous to elect a Catholic as President will not want him to serve as Vice President, a heart-beat away from the office.

2. The alternative is to proceed with the primaries, the convention and the election. If there is bigotry in the country, then so be it--there is bigotry. If that bigotry is too great to permit the fair consideration of a Catholic who has made clear his complete independence and his complete dedication to separation of church and state, then we ought to know it.

But I do not believe that this is the case. I believe the American people are more concerned with a man's views and abilities than with the church to which he belongs. I believe that the founding fathers meant it when they provided in Article VI of the Constitution that there should be no religious test for public office--a provision that brought not one dissenting vote, only the comment of Roger Sherman that it was surely unnecessary in view of the liberality prevailing in each State. And I believe that the American people mean to adhere to those principles today.

But regardless of the political outcome, this issue is here to be faced. It is my job to face it frankly and fully. And it is your job to face it fairly, in perspective and in proportion.

I am confident that the press and other media of this country will recognize their responsibilities in this area--to refute falsehood, to inform the ignorant, and to concentrate on the issues, the real issues, in this hour of the Nation's peril.

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Baptist Newsman Cited  
For 25 Years With AP

(4-22-60)

WASHINGTON ---(BP)--- A Baptist journalist has been honored by mention in the United States Senate.

Sen. Ralph W. Yarbrough (D., Tex.) paid tribute to David A. Cheavens, for 25 years of service with the Associated Press, Austin, Texas. Cheavens was described as "son of a Baptist missionary, married to the daughter of one of the most learned Baptist ministers of all time in the Southwest (Dr. J. M. Dawson), and in his own right the author of religious texts."

"Mr. Cheavens has been capitol correspondent for the Associated Press at Austin, Texas, in the State Capitol, since 1942," Yarbrough pointed out. "In this key position, his influence on Texas politics, Texas political campaigns, and Texas government has been considerable."

Earlier Cheavens was cited by Gov. Price Daniel of Texas in behalf of Frank J. Starzel, New York, general manager of the Associated Press. He was awarded a gold pin marking his 25 years of service.

During his student days Cheavens was editor of the "Daily Lariat," student publication of Baylor University. He has been associated with the Baptist Standard and daily newspapers both in Texas and in New York.

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