

# The mixed marriage: Tricky Dick & Bonnie John

by Jeff Greenfield

Like the Crones of Crete in "Zorba the Greek," the political analysts have swarmed over the Big Switch—each of them with his own version of Lindsay's ultimate aspirations: President in '72, Governor in '74, President in '76, Vice-President in '72. Yet in the catacombs of City Hall, the master political strategists are laughing up their sleeves; and well they might, for only they know the real prize at which Lindsay is aiming. Now, through the indiscreet blurring of an aide so close to the Mayor as to constitute sodomy, I can report Lindsay's untold goal: the Republican Vice-Presidential nomination.

The plot began last year, when President Nixon appointed John Connally as the Secretary of the Treasury. Immediately, Washington speculation began that Nixon was seriously considering Connally as his running-mate in 1972—a rumor that gained momentum as Spiro Agnew staggered around the world hitting golf balls and watching the dalliance of rhinoceri. Now—what are Connally's assets? He is tall and handsome. He comes from a populous, politically important state that Nixon failed to carry, either in 1960 or 1968. He comes from a constituency traditionally hostile to Republican Presidential candidates. He has connections with monied interests. And he is a Democrat—thus adding a sense of bipartisanship to a national ticket.

It was then that Lindsay and his closest advisers began noting the parallels. Lindsay is tall and handsome. He comes from a populous, politically important state that Nixon failed to carry in 1960 or 1968. He comes from a constituency traditionally hostile to Republican Presidential candidates. He has connections with monied interests.

But there the parallels turned sour. For John Lindsay was a Republican, born and bred. Replacing Agnew with Lindsay could not, the City Hall people realized, offer Nixon the image of national unity and bi-partisanship he sought. From that moment on, the switch was inevitable. John Lindsay would have to become a Democrat. The scenario is brilliantly direct. Despite a few grumbings, the state and national party leaders will have to welcome him into the ranks. Lindsay will spend the next few months building his ties with the Democratic world. Fund-raising dinners, political endorsements, alliances with county leaders and reformers, out-of-state rallies—the whole panoply of non-campaigning will be rolled out for this new, charismatic candidate.

Then, in the late spring of 1972, with interest in Lindsay at a fever pitch, Nixon will make a gesture of accommodation toward the liberals—something so dramatic that the Mayor could praise Nixon, consistent with his principles. "As a Democrat," the Mayor will say, "I believe in party loyalty. But

as an American, I must put principle above party. The President's mission to China," say, "is a great gesture toward world peace."

Shortly thereafter, according to the City Hall scenario, Nixon will announce that New York has been picked as a Federal Foster City—entitling it to \$5 billion more in federal aid. "A truly magnificent decision," the Mayor will say. "Whatever my Democratic political beliefs, we must recognize this as the act of a statesman."

By July, with the streets of New York clean, the police force increased to 150,000, and housing springing up around the city like weeds, the scenario will be ready for its grand climax. Spiro Agnew will send a letter to the President, begging to be excused from a second term. With reluctance, Nixon will accept; and then, he will disclose his intention of "by-passing partisan political considerations by appointing a man with long executive experience, who, despite his Democratic Party standing, is a man who has shown he can put the national interest above politics."

And thus New York's most powerful Democrat will realize his life-long dream—a place on the GOP national ticket.

(Jeff Greenfield is a former speechwriter for Mayor Lindsay.)