

Important Race In New York

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The New York Senate race is looming as the most important election contest of 1964 with the single exception of the race for the Presidency.

With one vote, the citizens of the most powerful state in the country will help to determine the fate of The Republican Party, Bob Kennedy, and—quite possibly—a Presidential election of the near future. Consequently, battle lines are being formed which are far more important than the outcome of one seat in the United States Senate.

First there is the Democratic Party of New York. While often thought of as the bastion of "Eastern liberalism," New York is a Republican—liberal Republican, it is true—state. The governorship, both Senate seats, both houses of the state legislature, and a majority of the Congressional delegation, are members of the GOP. This is so because the Republicans in New York are in large number unabashed liberals, and because the Democratic Party—which produced Al Smith, Herbert Lehman, and Franklin D. Roosevelt—has been unable to mount effective candidates.

The entrance of Robert F. Kennedy as that party's Senatorial candidate marks the first time in a score of years that a major figure in American politics has sought a post in New York on the Democratic slate. This is dismaying not only Republicans, but influential liberal Democrats as well.

For the GOP moderates and liberals, who are expecting, if not hoping, for a disastrous defeat for Sen. Goldwater this November, their hope in recapturing the party lies in demonstrating the vote-getting power of the liberal wing's candidates.

Kenneth Keating is the most recognized of liberal Republicans up for re-election; his victory would be an important trump card for the liberals in the GOP, and his defeat will leave control of the Republicans firmly in the hands of the Goldwaterites.

New York Republicans are thus mobilizing all the strength they can against the formidable thrust of the brother of a popular, martyred president who is demonstrating the same kind of "Hollywood-magnetism" that John F. Kennedy did four years ago. In the all-out fight being waged by the GOP, they are picking up support from an odd source: liberal, reform Democrats.

Last week a group of men and women long identified with the left of the Democratic Party announced their support for Sen. Keating, and their opposition to the "power grab" of Kennedy. The defectors include Carey McWilliams, editor of *The Nation*, ABC commentator Lisa Howard, and author-playwright Gore Vidal. (It was Vidal who wrote a brutal attack on the former Attorney General in *Esquire* two years ago which won him the enmity of the Kennedy clan.)

Their objection to Robert Kennedy is twofold. First, they charge, he is the candidate of the state's "bosses" who remain a power in the party. Second, they charge he is at heart an authoritarian and reactionary.

The *Esquire* article by Vidal accused Kennedy of indifference to civil liberties, and of an absolutist, "black-and-white" view of the world which made him a danger. They are out to stop him in his first elective race which they, no less than most Americans, view as a jumping off place for the Presidency four or eight years hence.

This November, then, will determine more than ever whether Keating or Kennedy will be New York's junior senator. It will help to seal the fate of moderate and liberal Republicanism's hopes for a comeback at the 1968 convention.

If Kennedy wins, it will assuredly mean that an able and ambitious political figure will have an important state's party as his power base. And it may, looking ahead, determine whether or not a Kennedy will again be making a bid for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States.