

EMK

November 14, 1968

Morningafterwise, what would you have thought if the mail had brought you a lapel button that read simply, "EMK"? My reaction would have been that my name had got on the mailing list of a Greek terrorist organization, and I'd have tossed the thing away.

But that is a sign of what sociologists might call Deficient Kennedy Awareness. Because—you guessed it—"EMK" stands for Edward Moore Kennedy; the button I speak of exists and was sent out on November 6 to how many thousands of people I do not know; the symbol EMK is obviously intended as this season's totemic replacement of the older manifests of political purity, like the PT 109 tie clips and the FKBLA (For Kennedy Before Los Angeles) buttons.

Really, the dynastic assertiveness of the Kennedys is a wonder of the world. Six years ago latecomers to Camelot were grumbling that Teddy's decision to run for the Senate on the slogan "He Can Do More for Massachusetts" was arrant opportunism such as to embarrass the entire country. Now many of

the same people who were saying that are asking us to prepare to name Teddy, not to a seat in the Senate because he is a Kennedy, but to the White House because he is a Kennedy. There are conservatives around who are accused of wanting to put back the clock. But none that I know of who desire to restore the divine right of kings.

Consider, for a moment, how mere non-Kennedys are treated. It is interesting to note how quickly Senator Eugene McCarthy, notwithstanding his abundant qualifications—he is wittier, profounder, more convincingly liberal, better read than any of Kennedys—is being discarded. Even after the assassination of Robert Kennedy, the court refused to turn to him. They gave as the reasons Mr. McCarthy's temperamental disqualifications. But similar disqualifications did not prevent the same group from being captivated by Adlai Stevenson, back Before Los Angeles.

No, the sin of Eugene McCarthy, one suspects, is insufficient servility to the Kennedy myth and to the Kennedy court. Notice how after the convention he was being not-so-gently bad-mouthed. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., said about him, a few weeks before the election, that he was an unlikely leader for the new America, because his following consisted of a "semiprecious fraternity of college graduates" (quite true, quite true; but nonetheless a provocative thing for one left Democrat to say about another).

And then Mr. Allard Lowenstein, who began the Draft McCarthy movement, has now announced coolly that Senator McCarthy is not the designated new leader of American liberalism, that the young people who supported him in New Hampshire and elsewhere were supporting not him, but his ideas. And the suggestion, of course, was that a more suitable vehicle could be found for carrying Senator McCarthy's ideals. Such as who? Why, such as Senator Kennedy.

Now it isn't going to be absolutely open and shut—disgraceful, the way our country forces Kennedys to fight for their throne. There are quite a lot of people around who are fiercely impressed by Senator Muskie. If Muskie were an ambitious man, who knows, he might prove to be an able contender, though he would probably be treated like Hamlet's stepfather.

And then, too, there is a slight problem involving John Lindsay. Mr. Lindsay's plans were severely affected by Mr. Nixon's victory.

Friends of Mr. Lindsay hoped for the following sequence of events. Mr. Nixon would lose. And his loss would be generally attributed to his deficient personality and excessive conservatism. Who then would rise as representing exactly the opposite features? John Lindsay, needless to say. Now, suddenly, bereft of his automatic standing as heir apparent, Mr. Lindsay faces a number of political problems, among them the accelerating disintegration of the city he promised to lead to paradise.

On the other hand, no doubt there are dreams that Nixon will prove as unpopular as Lyndon Johnson, and perhaps Lindsay would then emerge as 1972's Republican Eugene McCarthy. And if he won and was pitted against Teddy Kennedy, wouldn't that sort of spoil things for Kennedy? Not to say for the country?