

Why Do So Many Hate the Kennedys?

By A. C. GREENE, Editor of the Editorial Page

PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S coming visit to Dallas brings up the question once again of why so many people seem to hate the Kennedys.

This is not to assume that a majority of Americans dislike the President. But let's examine the fierce emotions he seems to arouse in those who do feel antipathy toward him.

First, we would note that it is generally expressed as toward "The Kennedys," a phrase which includes not just the President but his wife; his brothers, Robert and Edward (always referred to as Bobby and Teddy; his father; his daughter, Caroline, and to some extent even the little tyke, John Jr.



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Franklin D. Roosevelt and family called up this kind of bitterness, en masse, but the Trumans and Eisenhowers escaped it. Bess and Mamie remained lovable, even to their husbands' enemies.

Many Hold His Wealth Against Him

First, in order of importance, is that President Kennedy is a rich man whose money still "stinks." In other words, the generations haven't softened it into something he is qualified to have. People hold the Kennedy wealth against JFK, as though he should deny he has it. The Kennedy family is new rich, and acts it.

There is something to this, we'll admit. (We're far from being Kennedy apologists.) There is certainly a touch of vulgarity in the way the Kennedy tribe lives. (See—we're doing this en masse business ourself.) And the more the members try, separately or collectively, to live "like other people," the more enraged some of the public gets.

Second is the religious factor. Millions who wouldn't admit it in public still hold within themselves resentment that the President is a Catholic.

Here we would defend the President himself. He seems to have walked a careful tightrope of fairness in keeping separate his private and public religious views.

The recent Kentucky elections brought out all kinds of anti-Kennedy sentiment and stories. Democrats there explain why Ed Breathitt had such a narrow escape in his governor's race with Republican Louis Nunn: Breathitt was linked with Kennedy. Kentucky is traditionally liberal Democrat.

Behind the explanation, observers say, were these reasons. Strong anti-Catholic sentiment which voters are reluctant to talk about in pre-election polls. Nunn won votes by linking Kennedy's Catholicism and the Supreme Court's anti-prayer-in-school ruling. (Nunn told voters he would test the ruling by going into a school himself and leading a prayer.)

Civil Rights Program Hurt

The administration's civil rights program hurt Kentucky Democrats. Here again, the voters wouldn't admit to quite so much racial discrimination in polls as they practiced in voting. (This will certainly be a factor in Kennedy hatred, North or South. And we are convinced that it is intensified by the belief some have that the President isn't really as sincere in his civil rights pushing as he claims.)

When JFK called Breathitt to ask about how much money he might need for his campaign, Breathitt bluntly turned down any Kennedy money and Kennedy speaking support.

A small-town banker and Democrat summed up his own convictions in the case of Kennedy hatred: "The Kennedys give the impression that ordinary people don't know how to think or act or do for themselves."

The President himself has probably done less to receive the sharp emotionalism than his brothers. Brother Bobby has not endeared himself to many segments of capital his—including some liberals who say he is ruthlessly, ambitiously dictatorial.

The Kennedy in-laws have practiced a certain arrogance which shows through. Early linking, in the public mind, of the Kennedys, as a family, with the Frank Sinatra Hollywood-Las Vegas axis has been hard to eradicate.

All this is aside from the usual disfavor any president finds himself in with the "out" groups.

Well, we don't hold with either view, not to the "hate" limit. We've been disappointed at the President's vicissitudes, we don't like some of his camp followers, we wish he would take the tiller with a tighter grip. But we don't blame him for all our troubles.