

California Democratic Presidential Delegation Committee

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Hon. Thomas C. Lynch, Chairman
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THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT WAS MADE BY BOB COATE, CHAIRMAN, DEMOCRATIC STATE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, NORTHERN DIVISION, AT PRESS CONFERENCES IN SAN FRANCISCO AND LOS ANGELES ON FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 1968.

For four years I have watched California Democrats systematically divide and destroy themselves. Out of this, we have turned over the government of the largest State to people whose single goal is to dismantle government.

Now I see the same divisive efforts aimed toward the Presidential election in California.

Assembly Speaker Jesse Unruh has urged Senator Kennedy to enter the California Presidential Primary. This is fine. America thrives on action and discussion. But Unruh has chosen to go far beyond this point. He has attacked both President Johnson and Senator McCarthy. This is pointless, foolish and destructive.

Actually the probable entry of Senator Kennedy should assure the election of the Lynch delegation. Kennedy will simply siphon off anti-Johnson votes which otherwise would go to McCarthy.

Senator Kennedy has had months to make up his mind. Gene McCarthy had the courage to dive into the icy water. His campaign is essentially negative, geared to attract anti-Johnson votes. Whether any of us agree or disagree with McCarthy's views, we accept his civilized candidacy and respect his courage. Now it looks to some as if the water may not be so icy after all.

For two days I have talked to Democratic leaders in California. Without exception, their response to Unruh's heavy-handed pronouncements has been to reflect despair at the sight of the destruction starting again.

Democrats normally brawl. But out of the chaos they usually can pull together to beat the Republicans. Not when the brawling includes the astonishing presumption of a state legislator giving the back of his hand to the Democratic President.

I appeal to Senator Kennedy either to stick with his earlier statements that he will not run because he would divide Democrats --- or to be certain that Californians representing his candidacy do not use it as a means to assure the election of Nixon or Reagan in November.

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