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# Senate Democrats Await Caucus

## Absence of Influential Members Would Indicate Inner Disharmony

The Senate Democratic majority will hold its first caucus on the Kennedy program next Monday with Vice President Johnson presiding by invitation of Majority Leader Mansfield. The prospect is that some influential absentees will signal the group's inner discontent and disharmony which are a potential threat to the success of the program.

The Southern wing, opposed to so much of it, is presently in the position of the squeaky wheel which gets the most patronage grease. With blithe unconcern for issues, it has with hard acumen aggressively pressed the White House for appointments, led by the Vice President, himself.

The party liberals like the program, many of them before the President moved to the fore, but have been ignored by him to the point where they are today something less than the militant shock absorbers which may be vital in the clinches.

The need for cloakroom commandos on tough issues is an old story. The late Fiorello LaGuardia once put it that he could always use

brave men but what he really wanted was assassins who knew their business.

No hard and fast separation of Senate Democrats into conservatives and liberals is valid and the lineup varies on individual questions. But there are anywhere from 25 to 30 Democratic Senators who are New Frontiersmen by conviction, and they are by and large unhappy both with the President and with Senator Mansfield's failure to cut his old, close ties with Mr. Johnson on the matter of Senate business.

Just why the President has gone so far to placate Southerners whose votes he cannot expect to get on many issues is unclear. He has never been a member of the Senate inner ring which they dominate, few of them are among his close personal friends. Obviously, he feels Mr. Johnson can be helpful; on the other hand, Senator Yarborough of Texas, whom Mr. Johnson dislikes and vice versa, has a vote in the Senate and Mr. Johnson has none except in case of a tie. Senator Mansfield had early notice that many Senators

did not want what they regarded as Executive intrusion into Senate affairs. His proposal that Mr. Johnson should be invited to preside over Democratic caucuses was so objectionable he had to accept a compromise which provided that the Vice President might attend and that anyone present might be invited to preside.

A dauntless 17 voted against the compromise and many others said privately that they would have done so except they did not want to make any display of discord before the new President could even be inaugurated.

Senator Mansfield is able, experienced and well liked. He is also sensitive to people and political currents as a rule. It seems the more strange that he does not recognize the pattern which is forming in the group he leads.

Republicans find it all very interesting and are not disposed to be particularly tactful about it. A speech by Senator Fong of Hawaii, deeply critical of what seems to him Democratic inaction, has been put in the Congressional Record, with words of high praise from Senator Bush of Connecticut. The honeymoon is clearly over on the minority side.