EMOTIONALISM EXPLORED

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.

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 formed 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. (Here--we're doing this en masse business ourselves.) And the more the members--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 hide 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-based ruling. (Nunn told voters he would test the ruling by going into a school himself and leading a prayer.)