

Chicago Democrats badly Byrned

This past week, Mayor Jane Byrne, Chicago "Ayatollah" for the campaign of Sen. Edward Kennedy, forced the majority of a reluctant Cook County Democratic Party Central Committee to endorse Kennedy for the nomination.

The endorsement, seen by many observers as ill-timed and of far-reaching potential damage not only to the Democratic Party but also to Sen. Kennedy's own campaign chances, was made the day before Kennedy announced his candidacy.

Under the leadership of the late Mayor Richard J. Daley, the Cook County Democratic committeemen, comprising fifty from the City of Chicago and thirty from the suburbs, had always leaned heavily in favor of remaining "uncommitted" as a solid block of delegates to the Democratic nominating convention.

Political observers and former top advisors to the late Mayor Daley this week noted, both publicly and privately, that Jane Byrne had just destroyed the traditional and unique power of the Cook County Democrats within the national party with the "incredibly early" Kennedy endorsement.

Observers here and in Washington, as well as in the politically crucial "downstate" Illinois area, are now saying that Byrne's move represents an attempt to force a split in the Democratic Party.

Insiders in the Connally for president campaign in Illinois, being headed by Republican national committeeman Harold Byron Smith, Jr., have told reporters privately that they are ecstatic over Byrne's heavy-handed moves and have been engaged in attempts to sway anti-Byrne and anti-Kennedy traditional Democrats to act in support of Republican Connally.

The treatment of the Cook County committeemen by Byrne and her political ally, Chairman George Dunne, was described here as "atrocious." Reports received indicate that Byrne used the patronage power of the Mayor's office to threaten committeemen and city council members alike with loss of their ward patronage jobs unless they went along with her Kennedy endorsement.

Many of the late Mayor Daley's closest political allies and confidants, nevertheless, strongly objected to the move.

Nineteenth ward committeeman Thomas Hynes, the Cook County Assessor, urged that the committee withhold endorsements for at least two months, noting the fact that selection of a president is "a matter of the

utmost national and international importance." Congressman Daniel Rostenkowski opposed the Kennedy endorsement saying that his constituents do not agree with Byrne on her endorsement and "we owe it to our constituents" not to follow the mayor's lead. Lynn A. Williams, committeeman from suburban New Trier township, announced that "there is no clear support for either Sen. Kennedy or President Carter" among his Democratic voters and that straw polls conducted by the party there showed the clear winner being "none of the above."

Parks superintendent Ed Kelly, who has been feuding regularly with Byrne, seconded Williams' objections and added that the presidential endorsement was "not even on the agenda of today's meeting." Alderman Roman Pucinski proposed that before the committee make any presidential endorsement the committee should have the opportunity to hear directly and in person from every person seeking the Democratic nomination, as it does with candidates for county and state office. Pucinski accused Byrne of setting up a "kangaroo court" to "railroad" the Kennedy endorsement through. "But I think many of you who vote for the endorsement will soon be eating your words when you begin to find out this candidate's views on a few key issues," Pucinski warned.

The highpoint of the opposition, though, came when the late Mayor's son, state senator Richard M. Daley, now emerging as a strong statewide leader in the Democratic Party, rose to oppose the Kennedy endorsement. "You are making a serious mistake" warned Daley, and urged the committeemen not to be intimidated by Byrne's "ploy" that they will be isolated and destroyed if they vote against Byrne.

But the majority of the committeemen went with the madwoman of City Hall...who is now being openly called "Ayatollah" Jane Byrne in the political columns, cartoons, and in tens of thousands of leaflets circulating independently throughout the wards.

—Mitch Hirsch

'Blacks not high on Ted'

Banner headlines in the Nov. 13 Chicago Defender, the nation's most prestigious black newspaper announced "Blacks Not as High on Ted as Jane is—Poll Shows Byrne Visibility Could Hurt." The article in part reads:

If the election were held today, it's doubtful whether Mayor Byrne can, in fact, deliver Chicago and especially the city's black constituency, which singularly caused the demise of former Mayor Bilandic.

Some 500 persons were presented with that question and the results might indicate that Mayor Byrne does not have the support of the black community that she believes she has.