

Underworld Confidential:

WILL KEFAUVER BE PRESIDENT?

LEE MORTIMER

IF THERE IS one indisputable fact about the Kefauver investigation, it is that it has supplied a vast audience with some of the best free entertainment of modern times. With its real live gangsters mugging and grunting in front of the cameras, its squirming politicians, wicked woman, and new-style heroes, it has given Warner Bros. something to worry about. I don't like to put a crimp in anybody's amusement and I'll be kind of sorry to go back to Bogart myself, but there are some aspects of the hearings that have been neglected. I think they ought to go into the record along with the endless "I don't remembers" and the minute accounts of spaghetti-eating contests between politicians and gangsters.

The average American was doubtless shocked by the visual

revelation of the influence of the criminal empire in this country. Actually, nothing new was discovered or revealed. There was not an item in all the vast volumes of testimony which had not already been printed in the press or the public records or with which the FBI and the Treasury were not thoroughly familiar.

A few big names have been made "goats." Nothing very serious will happen to them. A few light sentences of the kind most criminals can do "standing on their heads" may be handed out. The criminal organizations will remain intact although they may take a brief rest. Meanwhile, carefully prepared cases against some key figures have been ruined by premature divulging of testimony. And a couple of them were heard to

remark recently, "Man, that Kufohvuh is sure doing a swell job. Now we know who we can trust."

The more naive and gullible members of the audience were plainly impressed by what looked like the forthright honesty and daring of the committee Senators, in particular, of chairman Estes Kefauver. A great many people wondered, at the outset, how a party-line Democrat would manage an investigation which if honestly and fearlessly conducted would turn up innumerable ties between criminals and Democrat politicians. To many, the answer to this riddle was that Kefauver is that rare bird in American politics, a genuine independent without strings, ties, or ambitions. To others, the answer is that the hearings were skillfully designed not to uncover anything of importance. A few accidents happened. In Chicago an enterprising reporter sneaked out evidence damaging to Senator Lucas from a closed hearing. He was threatened with contempt proceedings by Kefauver before the Chairman decided to take the credit himself.

If the Kefauver committee was not primarily designed to expose criminals or pass laws to hinder them, just why did it get started? What was it supposed

to do? Well, when all the smoke has blown away and the thunder dies down, I predict that only one figure will still be visible to the public. It will be that of Estes Kefauver striding rapidly towards his peculiar but deeply cherished goal, the Democratic vice-presidential nomination. And, in the light of all the evidence, I claim that the Senate committee hearings were, from the outset, staged and framed chiefly for the purpose of electing Senator Kefauver vice-president in 1952.

Of course, the idea is a little hard to swallow. Nobody has ever heard proud parents cooing into a cradle and hoping their boy will grow up to be vice-president. For some decades the post has been regarded, in political circles, as a kind of glorified booby-prize. Candidates don't get nominated, they get tagged — you're it, brother. Yet Estes Kefauver has been conscientiously and purposefully campaigning for the nomination since he was elected Senator in 1948. It makes him a new phenomenon in American politics — a man who plugs night and day for a job nobody else wants.

I HAPPEN TO have known Estes Kefauver fairly well. He struck me as something of an enigma. I soon discovered that

most of his colleagues were likewise mystified by him. There were two schools of thought in Washington on the subject of Kefauver. Some people thought he was dumb but honest; others thought he was unusually smart and a first-class conniver. The latter group claim that only a hillbilly in a Li'l Abner strip could be as blithely unaware of the monkey business behind the hue and hokum crime investigations as the strapping Senator pretends to be. After studying him for a while, I had him placed in the first category — dumb but honest. Now I've begun to wonder.

The vice-presidential situation at the moment is relatively simple. Barkley will be seventy-five years old in 1952. Age alone precludes him from running again. Whether Truman is a candidate for President or chooses his own successor, the Democratic campaign must and will be fought on Truman's record of New-Deal — Fair Deal progressivism. The new platform and old claims will not be greeted with huzzahs of approval in the conservative South. Which means that the running mate in '52 must again be a Southerner to hold it in line. On the other hand he can't be a pure, unreconstructed rebel or he will alienate labor, the Negro

vote, the big city "liberals" and radicals, the bleeding hearts and other powerful minorities.

When you look at it that way, Estes fits into the slot like a new nickel in a candy machine. He was born and bred in Tennessee and speaks with a genteel Dixie accent, which, though adulterated by his years at Yale, is still unmistakably stars and bars. He is also a voluble admirer of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. He has faithfully hewed to the administration line in Congress except for a few queer leftist and Southern deviations. He was one of the seven Senators who voted with Representatives Marcantonio and F. D. Roosevelt Jr. in an attempt to defeat the McCarran Communist control bill. On the other hand, he has voted against the FEPC and anti-lynch laws. To his "liberal" Northern supporters, he gives the timeworn excuse that "the South isn't ready." His position doesn't need an excuse in the South; it gets too many votes.

But, granting that the situation and the Kefauver tactics make him an odds-on favorite in the Veep Handicap next year, the question still remains — why should anyone want to be vice-president in the first place? Why, indeed should anyone want the one-eyed orphan's job

so badly as to start gunning for it a full four years before the convention? Not that his unique ambition has done him any harm. It is just because his sights are set so low that Estes is regarded as a disarming, ingenuous fellow. Nobody even believes he is making a serious play for it. The voters attribute all his moves to a desire to do his sworn duty as a Senator. His colleagues don't bother sniping at him or organizing against him. Why should they? For the vice-presidency?

Maybe Estes isn't as dumb as people give him credit for.

LET'S CONSIDER a few facts and figures. If Mr. Truman runs again and is reelected, he will have passed his seventy-second birthday before his new term will end. And any televised or untelevised bookmaker will give you thirteen to five that he won't go the distance. Which would give Estes the big plum without a struggle. If Truman does survive a third term, he will certainly be too old to run for a fourth. As vice-president, Estes would be no Garner. You'd hear plenty from him and he would make a lot of headlines and television programs. He would then turn up as the logical choice for the 1956 nomination.

Now, suppose Truman decides to retire at the end of his present term, who will be in line for the nomination? There are a number of hopefuls but they cannot campaign for delegates against the incumbent chief. Kefauver, however, is now actively campaigning for vice-presidential support and has no opposition whatsoever. This grand inquisitor of crime has already secured the pledges of many state delegations for that position. If Truman decides to retire to Missouri, who will be in a better position to step into his shoes than Kefauver? Which makes him somebody worth knowing something about.

Until Kefauver defeated the choice of the Crump machine in 1948 Tennessee primaries and began to be hailed as a male St. Joan, he had not managed to gain much recognition outside his native state. There he had attracted attention early as a young attorney of a somewhat different stripe than his barefoot, corn-guzzling constituents. Six-foot three and handsome, Kefauver was a football star in college and studied law at Yale, which gave him an elevated status in Chattanooga society, where anyone who wore shoes before his twentieth birthday is considered a blueblood. His marriage to British Nancy Patterson

Pigott, the daughter of a minor Scottish Baronet gave his social standing another boost. He practised law profitably for thirteen years without much thought of politics. Then he met the man who made him what he is today and is still giving him his cues. The *deus ex machina* was Silliman Evans, the fat pontifical publisher of the *Nashville Tennessean*.

Evans is a carpet-bagger in reverse. He was a Texas newspaperman and wire-puller, a legislative lobbyist and airplane stock salesman until he heard the call during the 1932 campaign. Then he moved to Washington as Fourth Assistant postmaster general, a job which he held for a year until he rose, by the grace of Jesse Jones, to the presidency of the Maryland Casualty Company. The transition was not accomplished without some legerdemain on the part of FDR and the RFC. Later when the *Nashville Tennessean* got into a mess, the RFC waved its magic wand again and Evans emerged as a publisher. The *Tennessean* changed overnight from a violent anti-Roosevelt paper to the South's leading hosannah-shouter for the New Deal.

The young and good-looking attorney over in Chattanooga caught his eye. Kefauver got his tryout as State Commissioner of Finance and Taxation in 1939

and in the same year was sent to Congress as the Representative from the Third Tennessee district. He fared well in Washington. A veritable bear for work, Kefauver keeps going till late in the evening and starts pitching in early the next morning even after a gay, convivial night such as he frequently passes. He televises prissy and sounds prudish but his appearance is deceiving. Actually, he is a two-fisted scotch drinker who can handle it well in large quantities. He likes to dance and has an inexhaustible fund of risqué stories. Occasionally, he even puts two bucks on a nag. He is also a natural joiner and glad-hander with a genius for attracting publicity.

THE MUCH-TOUTED campaign in 1948 was a pushover that required little political heroism. Aging Boss Crump was the last of the old school municipal overlords left in the South. He ruled Memphis, which is, relatively, fairly small potatoes. His state and national power has been vastly exaggerated and he could not even always hold Memphis in line. He never won a victory without considerable help from other Tennessee Democrat leaders, including, at times, Kefauver, himself, and his master, Silliman Evans.

The 1948 campaign was merely the result of a falling out among allies. Evans decided to contest Crump for the State leadership which Washington handouts were making a juicy prize. It was easy. With Evans plugging him daily on page one of the *Tennessean*, Kefauver was already the best-known man in the state. His machine-like pro-Administration record in the House of Representatives earned him Washington Support. The vast number of TVA payrollees and beneficiaries could be counted on to vote pro-New Deal, and Kefauver was its acolyte. Besides which, city bosses have been taking a beating everywhere since the war. It's in the air.

Now that he was a U. S. Senator, Estes had a national forum. Once the returns were safely in, Kefauver, Evans and other stalwarts in their brain trust saw a green light to the promised land. Only one thing perplexed them.

How can you sell a name like Estes Kefauver? Most of our Presidents have had simple, Anglo-Saxon names that gave no trouble to the man on the street. Estes Kefauver was quite a mouthful. The average man was likely to quit cold before he was halfway through telling his friend to vote for it. It was almost as much of a jawbreaker

as Hickenlooper. Some of Estes' friends still can't pronounce it correctly and the variants are legion. According to its owner, it is key-fau-ver with the syllables evenly stressed, the least guessable solution.

They stewed unhappily until one of the big thinkers pointed out that Roosevelt was also a Dutch name which no two Roosevelts pronounced alike. It probably looked just as impossible as Kefauver till Teddy made it a household word through his circus tactics. Why not tear a leaf out of the old book? It was decided fairly to cram the name down the public throat. Estes was to get it in the newspapers every day and twice on Sunday.

During the first year, while most Senate freshmen are still modestly trying to learn the score, Estes went to work and latched on to as many commitments as the rules allowed. He sponsored scores of bills and erupted into speech at the slightest provocation. He made as many guest appearances on radio programs as he was allowed to, and rode far and wide, lecturing, scattering interviews in all directions, and getting his profile in the dailies. He never forgot the lesson he learned from his coonskin cap Senatorial campaign which was dreamed

up by a delirious, paid press-agent. Then came his golden opportunity. It began modestly enough and nobody had the slightest idea how it was going to snowball.

During 1948 and 1949, a number of newspapermen, including Jack Lait and myself, wrote about the existence of a national crime ring. We were pooh-poohed. Estes, however, studies the papers carefully and knows a good thing when he sees one. Following his custom of introducing legislation for everything, he came up haltingly with crime control measures late in 1949. He didn't get very far. A few months later, with the spotlight shining even more brightly on national crime, Estes found a favorable moment and jumped in with a resolution to set up an investigation. History was in the making.

With the taxpayers paying the freight, Estes and his cohorts set up a three-ringed video circus, complete with clown (Tobey of New Hampshire, a doddering Republican who votes New Deal and gets campaign contributions from Truman backers), advance-men, press-agents, barkers, freak side-shows, and a ring-master. The public was only shown the hero in action. Behind the scenes, the eager advance men, publicity

and booking agents rode from town to town arranging for headlines and broadcasting time and staking out the concessions — but not for peanuts. The concession-selling was the most important part of the proceedings.

Last summer, to cite one instance, one of the Kefauver outriders blew into New York exuding confidence like a dress-salesman with a copy of a Paris original. He approached several wealthy citizens with a typical proposition! In return for contributions to Senator Kefauver's vice-presidential campaign, the committee would allocate interesting roles in the medicine show and allow contributors to cash in on the hectic publicity the hearings would generate. There was much talk of jobs and saleable influence, and the odds on Kefauver's eventually becoming President were discussed in the manner of a Winter book on the Kentucky Derby. Many thousands of dollars were collected.

The agent spoke for two hours, frankly describing the complex operations of the crime-busting road show. His emphasis was on the harvest of dollars and delegates, not on such nonsense as reform. He explained that contributions were being solicited in every likely spot. The collections were to persuade

the delegates to vote the right way at next year's Democratic convention.

THERE WERE other such incidents. At dinner one evening at the Shoreham Hotel in Washington, a brash young newspaperman who once worked for Evans, mentioned that he was going to New York to pick up some campaign contributions. Estes nodded and said, "Don't forget the money you are supposed to pick up for me."* I then asked this Kefauver lieutenant if, when he went to New York for campaign contri-

butions, he expected to get any from Frank Costello. In front of Kefauver, chairman of the century's biggest and most publicized crime-investigating committee, he replied, "It depends on whom we need the money for. If it is someone like Matt Neely of West Virginia — where it doesn't matter — it probably comes from the Costello crowd. But we wouldn't want to embarrass Estes. For him we try to get it from Bernard Baruch."

Estes made no comment.

Before the committee swung into action, promises were made

* Apropos of money-raising, an advance man connected with the investigating committee, and more directly connected with Senator Tobey, approached various wealthy New Yorkers with a subtly worded pseudo press release on Tobey and the Committee. The following quote from the release pretty thoroughly establishes its motivation:

"This committee is recognized as one having the most far-reaching powers of any investigating committee ever to be organized by either House or Senate. It has the power to go anywhere in the country and subpoena books and records as well as individuals together with the power to *obtain upon command, from the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the Income Tax Return of any individual subject to its investigation.* Already, much valuable information hitherto unknown has been compiled but a large portion of it has of course not been given to the press for obvious reasons."

This release was over the signature of Frank W. Horne. The release emphasized, not too subtly, that Senator Tobey had access to income tax returns, and it suggested to men of wealth that they should, of course, support the senator. The senator was, at that time, in close quarters in New Hampshire: he barely won renomination as a Republican, and his victory is generally attributed to Democrats voting in the Republican primary.

in advance to the White House and the Democratic National Committee to the effect that nobody important would be seriously embarrassed by the probe. What with the number of campaign contributors who were promised solos and bit parts in the show, the casting of the hearings turned into a major operation. The participants also had to be well-rehearsed. A fluffed line or a wrong entrance or exit and the whole thing might have boomeranged. But most of all, care had to be taken to make sure there would be no trouble from the committee itself. This was not too difficult to arrange.

One of the two Democrats, O'Connor of Maryland, is backed by a notoriously corrupt, mob-ridden political machine. In return for his good conduct, no investigations were to be held in the Free State, from which the stench can easily be smelled in Washington. Hunt of Wyoming is a dentist who comes from a state where the only crime is cattle-rustling and claim-jumping. For the first time in history, the minority members of a committee were appointed by the Vice President and not by the minority leaders. Barkley, himself a friend of Frank Erickson, the bookmaker, was in on the plan to make Kefauver his suc-

cessor. Following orders, he named two Republicans who were too busy campaigning for reelection to attend meetings. One of them, Tobey, is a New Deal beneficiary, and a senile maunderer who could be counted on to have a quasi-religious fit during an embarrassing moment. The other, Wiley, was the ranking minority member of the Foreign Relations Committee and, because of the Korean War, had little time to spare. Thus, there was really no one to check up on the chairman.

For chief counsel of the committee, a post of crucial importance, Kefauver chose Rudolph Halley, a New Yorker of no apparent talent whose sole qualifications were that he had served as a lawyer for the Truman committee and was the protege of ex-justice Ferdinand Pecora. Pecora was beaten for Mayor of New York in 1950 after it was charged and not denied that he was the hand-picked candidate of Frank Costello. Halley, stern scourge of crime, was also counsel for a transportation company in which gangsters held large stock interests. None of the people associated with him in the company were questioned by the committee, although impressive evidence against them was placed in Halley's hands. Hal-

ley has admitted to me that he knew mobsters held stock in his client's company.

SOME OF THE committee's advance scouts were sent out early to Los Angeles. The movie industry was then informed that its gangster tie-ups were very likely to be featured and turn up in the press. Soon afterwards a prominent Hollywood public relations expert appeared in the East with, it was said, \$50,000 for "legal expenses" to retain counsel for the industry if it was brought into the crime hearings. Gangbuster Halley told me he did not know the movie man. The movie man said he did not know Halley. Two days later I saw the alleged bearer of \$50,000 worth of good news arm-in-arm with Halley in New York's swank night club, El Morocco. They weren't there to dance with each other. Then Kefauver made an appearance in a film — for pay, naturally. The vice-presidential campaign shifted into high and the word went out that Halley was in line for the first vacancy on the New York Federal bench.

If sheer work and an ambition that lets nothing stand in the way qualify a man for the vice-presidency, Estes sure rates the

job. Television isn't the only medium he employs for getting his name and face to the attention of the public. A clipping service keeps him supplied with every item in which his name appears. He communicates personally with every publication that carries a story about him or crime, sometimes by wire at government expense. His letters have a special intimate and personal flavor. Even one to a newspaperman whom he does not know has the quaint Kefauver touch — the typed salutation of Dear Mr. Doe is crossed out and a handwritten "Dear John" substituted.

If all these carefully laid plans to make him vice-president, then president, go up in smoke, Estes won't lose by his labors. An ingratiating speaker, with a voice that almost melts the microphone, he has long been a star on the lecture circuit, commanding fees as high as \$2500 a night for a well-bred discourse on world government. His television appearances and new-found glamor should up his rates and multiply his bookings. Everybody likes a gangbuster these days, particularly if he goes about it in a nice, refined fashion and doesn't hurt any important people.

The Shillelagh:

A Weapon of Honor

PETER KAVANAGH

I HAVE OBSERVED, since coming to America, that the shillelagh is competing strongly with the harp as the symbol of Ireland and the Irish. It is not my place to praise or blame those responsible for this shift in the symbol. There are plenty of Irish-American watch-dog societies whose avowed purpose is to stand guard over such affairs and to see that the name of Ireland is not maligned by British or even Yankee propagandists. Besides, if I may be allowed to coin a phrase, America is a free country and if her people want to choose even a green duck-egg as the symbol for everything connected with the ould sod, that is entirely their own business. My purpose, therefore, in this brief note is not to complain but rather to give a direction to the

movement and to make some observations on the genuine Irish shillelagh.

As the discerning American will, no doubt, have suspected, the stumpy, black root of a tree which tourists carry back from Ireland and which adorns many a Third Avenue saloon in New York is not the genuine article. True enough, it is a primitive form of shillelagh, but one which never got past what might be called the testing stage. I have never seen it used in Ireland and my researches have failed to turn up a record of its ever being used even for putting an injured horse out of pain.

It seems that the genuine shillelagh is unknown to Americans who, in their careless way, are inclined to apply the term