

# Texas Trouble Seen for Kennedy

By ROLAND EVANS JR.

AUSTIN, Texas (HTNS) — On the eve of their 2-day joint campaign here, the Kennedy-Johnson ticket appears to be in deep trouble in this state of 24 electoral votes, the nation's fourth largest.

Loyal Democrats working to elect Sen. John F. Kennedy and Texas Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson, who will stump the state jointly starting Monday night at El Paso, are deeply concerned over the intensity of the religious issue. They are also worried over what they regard as clear signs that conservative Democrats, who backed Johnson's previous campaigns here, are using Kennedy's religion as the springboard to carry the state for the Republicans in November.

These Democrats are not entirely happy about Kennedy's decision to engage in a question-and-answer session Monday night in Houston with Protestant clergymen. They fear that it might possibly exacerbate the religious issue and they fear it as a make-or-break affair that could set the pace of debate over Kennedy's religion throughout the campaign.

Several prominent conservative Democrats, all of whom have ties with the powerful Southern Baptist Church, are being cited as examples of what is happening politically down here. They include Guy Newman, president of Howard Payne Baptist Church in Brownwood; Earl Hankamer, a Houston oilman who has for years been an important contributor to Baylor University, also a Baptist school, and Carr P. Collins, president of the Fidelity Union Life Insurance Co. of Dallas, a trustee of Baylor University and also a director of the Baptist Foundation.

These three Democrats all supported Johnson in the past. Today they are all important members of Texans-for-Nixon, the chief political group here supporting Vice-President Nixon and Henry Cabot Lodge.

Beyond this, however, the "loyal" Democrats backing Johnson have been told that up to 95 per cent of the state's 3,700 Southern Baptist preachers will support the Republican ticket and will advise their congregations to do likewise. Well-informed estimates here are that this support may bring into the Republican fold more than 45 per cent of all the Southern Baptists in the state.

Johnson, who spent a brief weekend at his ranch on the Pedernales River near Johnson City, flew late Sunday to El Paso to meet Kennedy. He is deeply concerned, according to friends, that the passions that may be unleashed in an emotional debate over Kennedy's Catholicism pose a critical threat to national unity. He is fearful, it may be said, lest the intensity of the debate open wounds that would not heal by Inauguration Day, no matter who is elected, and that the consequent disunity might give the Soviet Union a significant assist in its battle to win the cold war. The senator preaches this theme wherever he goes.

His mail is an accurate barometer of the kind of thinking that is making strong headway among some Texas voters. The following quotation from a letter he received Saturday is a fair sample:

"... I'm sorry to admit that Texas reared anything as ugly and traitorous as you. As sure as God is ruling His universe, you will rue the day you agreed to run with . . . Kennedy. As a mason, a Baptist and a Texan, I feel that you are a disgrace to the principles of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

"I'll do everything within my power to defeat your efforts to (reach) the high office of vice-president and also the U.S. Sen-

ate. I'm ashamed that I ever had so little judgment to ever support . . . you in the first place."

The letter was signed and Johnson is composing an answer to it and others like it. The author had been a staunch Johnson man

in his two previous senatorial election campaigns.

Heavy publicity is being given in the press to the televised question-and-answer session Monday night between Kennedy and the Protestant group. The Organization of Protestant and other

Americans United for Separation of Church and State was reported Sunday planning to hand out its literature, questioning whether a Roman Catholic President could withstand alleged pressures from the vatican, at the Houston confrontation Monday evening.