Dodd's Image in Connecticut
Unstained by Charges

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HARTFORD, Conn., April 2—As a missile would fly, Hartford is roughly 12 air miles from the cloak room of the United States Senate. Just next door, so to speak.

It is as remote as Murmansk, however, from Sen. Thomas Dodd's present Washington tribulations.

Within the political community here, there is a vague awareness that columnists Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson have written an unflattering version of the Senator's life and times and that the Senate Committee on Conduct and Standards is quietly and in its own good time exploring the whole affair.

Image Remains Bright

But beyond that, Washington's newest approximation of a political scandal has hit Connecticut with all the impact of a cotton candy fragment. The image of the white-maned, Roman-nosed senior senator ("he really would look good in a toga") remains bright.

As the leaders of the Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus Assembly in the Northern District of Connecticut put it a few days ago, Dodd is "unstained from the malicious and slanderous articles being published by certain newspaper gossip columnists."

A more common reaction came this week from a puzzled Republican Committeeman in Westport in the heart of exubria: "The Dodd Case? What Dodd case?"

This vacancy of mind is the product of several factors, the first being that Pearson and Connecticut have barely a nodding acquaintance. The two daily and three weekly newspapers that ordinarily carry his column boast a combined circulation of no more than 50,000 among a population of nearly 3 million. And for the Dodd columns, Pearson's audience has been even smaller (roughly 20,000) because three of his clients have not printed them.

It is common practice, of course, for newspapers to plagiarize one another and to get onto the trail of a story someone else has dug up. But in this affair, Connecticut's major papers have reacted with passive caution, in part because Pearson's batting average is erratic and in part because the trail is both cold and unreal.

An example is the Pearson allegation that Dodd has been under the influence of Julius Klein, American lobbyist for West German interests.

"That may mean something in Washington," Republican State Chairman A. Soarlo Pinney says, "but it doesn't mean anything here. Nobody ever heard of Julius Klein."

Pinney, on the other hand, has taken a professional interest in Pearson's other principal allegation: that Dodd's 1964 campaign finance reports are full of discrepancies. The Republican problem here is that there is no way to check up because the records have been destroyed by the Secretary of State in a routine housecleaning action that is permissible under state law.

Another problem is that some of Pearson's specific charges haven't checked out.

Item: Pearson claimed in a column on March 14 that Dodd had listed a campaign expense of $60,000 for printing done by the University Press of Cambridge at Roxbury, Mass. "A company spokesman recalled that University Press had done absolutely no printing for Dodd in 1964. In fact, the company wrote off as a bad debt a printing bill left over from the Senator's 1956 campaign."

S. M. Cowan, president of the printing company, tells a different story. Dodd did pay him $10,000 following the 1964 campaign in payment of a printing debt—secured by Dodd's personal note—which dated back to Dodd's losing campaign for the Senate in 1936.

If more politicians would be as honorable about their debts as Sen. Dodd," said Cowan, "I'd be a lot better off. He is outstanding as a man who really kept his word."

Item: Pearson reported on March 25 that Dodd's income in 1961 included a $50,000 fee from "Jimmy Hoffa's Teamster Union."

The evidence suggests that the $50,000 was a fee earned in 1959 before Dodd entered the Senate and that his client was not Hoffa, but a dissident group of Teamsters who had gone to court to keep Hoffa out of office.

Whatever the real facts, the Connecticut press and the Connecticut Republican Party have been reluctant to get into such unpalatable matters.

Dodd is not up for reelection until 1970, so there is no urgency to this affair. Furthermore, he has managed to create an all-purpose political image which the Republicans despair of puncturing.

Battled Dillinger

"He's the only politician I ever heard of," said one GOP leader, "who was endorsed by Steve Allen one day and Clara Boudin in the next. He's got the labor unions, the Catholics, the ADA, the Italians, the Poles. We even had Goldwater-Dodd clubs in Connecticut in 1964."

This is all explicable, Dodd got out of Yale Law School in 1933, flunked the

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state bar exam, joined the FBI, and
had the good political fortune to take
part in a gun battle at Rhinelander,
Wis., with John Dillinger.
A year later he took over the National
Youth Administration in Connecti-
cut, worked up to an appointment in
the Justice Department where, as he
could later claim, he prosecuted the
Ku Klux Klan in South Carolina, and
took part in anti-sabotage investiga-
tions during World War II.
After the war, he was a prosecutor
of Nazis at the Nuremberg trials, an
early and vocal anti-Communist, and
was finally admitted to the bar through
an act of judicial dispensation.
Thus, his political career was
launched. In 1932 and 1934 he was the
only Democrat in the Connecticut
House delegation. He made it to the
Senate in 1933 and is now regarded as
a fixture in that office.
Backed by Labor
His anti-Communist credentials are
universally acknowledged. His domestic
liberalism earns him high marks from
ADA and the AFL-CIO. He is top-draw-
er at the White House, having been a
lonely Connecticut advocate of Lyndon
Johnson for President in 1960.
Dodd went home to Hartford on the
night of February 25, a month after the
Pearson columns about him began to
appear. The occasion was the Jeffer-
son-Jackson Day dinner and the ball-
room at the Statler Hilton was filled
with 2000 party functionaries attracted
by the evening's featured performer,
Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.).
Dodd got there late and as he
stepped up to make a little speech, the
ovation began. People started standing
up and in a moment everyone in the
room was on his feet. It went on and
on and by the time Dodd sat down it
was clear he had no political problems
with that crowd.