

1991

Iannone, Carol: News Articles (1991): News Article 07

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Recommended Citation

Evans, Rowland and Novak, Robert, "Iannone, Carol: News Articles (1991): News Article 07" (1991). *Iannone, Carol: News Articles (1991)*. Paper 19.
http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_I_36/19

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The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

Teddy in the Shadows

The Senate's rejection of conservative Carol Iannone had less to do with her failure to meet tests of "political correctness" than the bizarre Easter weekend events at the Kennedy estate in Palm Beach.

New York University Prof. Iannone would today be on the National Endowment for the Humanities advisory council had not Sen. Edward M. Kennedy exercised vigor and power to turn Democratic senators against her. What's not so well known is that Kennedy's personal appeal for votes against Iannone alleged that her supporters were tying her confirmation to his connection with rape charges against his nephew.

In isolation from the timeless controversy in his personal life and his long-collapsed presidential prospects, Kennedy has struggled hard to uphold his reputation in the Senate for effectiveness and hard work—surpassing the records of his two elder brothers there. Whenever his lifestyle threatens to embarrass him, his instant reaction is to display his Senate clout.

That explains his aggressiveness in the Iannone affair. But on this and other questions, Kennedy operates from the shadows. He seldom gives interviews, either for print or on camera. His intent is often obscure, masked by tangled rhetoric that even old friends sometimes cannot decode. His agenda seems increasingly influenced by pressure from the political left.

On Carol Iannone, confusion abounds about Kennedy's intent. Administration sources say they had

a commitment from him to go along with her if two other NEH council appointments were noncontroversial (which they were). Denying any such pledge, the senator's spokesman told us he promised only consideration by the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, which he heads.

Kennedy's avowed reason for turning against Iannone was the same shaky rationale of her academic foes: Her failings stem not from deficiencies of political correctness but from lack of "distinction" in her qualifications. But after being rejected, Iannone flatly repudiated that, saying: "I am surprised that Sen. Kennedy made qualifications the issue, because when I met with him he said qualifications were not of concern to him."

By Kennedy's own private account, the source of his vehemence against Iannone was neither ideology nor qualifications but personal politics. When he finally declared opposition, he told administration officials the campaign for her by the "right wing" made it impossible for him to support her.

What the senator meant by that was made clear in pleas to fellow Labor Committee members to oppose Iannone. He told them candidly that he was under attack in the rape charge against his nephew William Smith and that his enemies would link confirmation of Iannone to deterioration of his influence in the Senate.

Faced with that premise, Sens. Paul Simon and Christopher Dodd could not deny the rare appeal from their chairman to reverse their inclination to support confirmation. Neither of them—nor per-

haps two other committee members—were happy contributing to Iannone's defeat by a single vote.

Appealing for the vote of one senator, Kennedy mentioned that his friend, novelist William Styron, had been assailed by Iannone. To another senator, he noted opposition to confirmation by his feminist supporters.

To backers of Iannone, Kennedy told an odd tale of how academic friends had pleaded for help in fighting confirmation. He said he had told them that to defeat her, they must build their own opposition to her. Now that they had, the senator went on, how could he abandon his allies?

Thus, the premise for Kennedy's zeal to defeat Carol Iannone was demands from a left-wing fringe, a posture for a Kennedy so ironic and anomalous that it may have inspired a pungent speech to the Senate by Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan after Iannone's defeat.

Moynihan noted that in 1960 when he was supporting John F. Kennedy, "reformers hated and feared" the future president. To explain the views of "working class Democrats" backing Kennedy, Moynihan wrote an article in *Commentary*. Frequent contributions by Iannone to that journal were cited by her foes as evidence of scholarly weakness. That outraged Moynihan, who congratulated Prof. Iannone for being "banned in the Democratic Party." He did not mention Ted Kennedy at the moment of his shadowy victory.