

Today and Tomorrow . . . By Walter Lippmann

Nixon as Leader

HAVING SUCCEEDED in appeasing Gov. Rockefeller, the Vice President has had then to deal with his most difficult problem, which is how to get a platform and to persuade the Party to take a stand which will give him a chance to win the election. For the Rockefeller platform and the Rockefeller stand were indubitably the best bet if any Republican can win the presidency this year.



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All the polls show that the Republicans are a much smaller Party than the Democrats, something like as 40 is to 60. To be elected, Nixon has to be much stronger than his Party—if the Gallup Poll is right, he has to be even stronger than Eisenhower was in 1956. To come near this he has to be very strong in the big industrial and urbanized states. He needs a platform which in its pledges to deal with public needs is substantially the same as the Democratic platform and Gov. Rockefeller's personal platform.

That this is what he would like to do is shown by a speech he made at St. Louis last month. After scoffing at Rockefeller's "growthmanship," he turned around and espoused the Rockefeller-Democratic position on public needs. He called for public spending, which he called "investment" in "our public education establishments, in our national transportation system, in the renewal of our rundown urban areas, in the development of our natural and human resources, in providing imaginative new leadership for the exciting scientific and technological revolution

which will dramatically change the whole character of life in America and the world in our time."

THIS BEING what Nixon would like to stand for, he has to reckon with the President and his close advisers, on the one hand and with the Congressional Republicans from the old Republican strongholds on the other. We have seen, as I pointed out yesterday, that in his agreement with Rockefeller on defense and public needs, he was very careful indeed to avoid any departure from the main lines of the Eisenhower economic and fiscal policy. This does not mean that as President he would not depart from them. As a matter of fact he would be almost bound to depart from them. But it does mean that in the campaign he must be careful not to say that he has departed from them. This is a serious handicap. For the things that he and Rockefeller would like to do cannot be done without a substantial change in the Eisenhower policy.

In the writing of the platform the dominant voices appear to be not so much Eisenhower and his immediate advisers, and not Nixon himself, but the Republican Old Guard in Congress fortified by an eccentric fringe of reactionaries who dream of a golden past that never existed and pretend that they are conservatives. The main preoccupation of the Old Guard Republicans is not to elect Nixon. It is not even to carry Congress, which they know is impossible. Their main preoccupation is to preserve their power in Congress which rests on a coalition with many of the older Southern Democrats. The bond of their coalition is that the Northern Republicans will help to stall off civil rights measures and that

with the Southerners they will both stall off the welfare measures.

This is the reason, which is otherwise politically inexplicable, why Nixon is having such a hard time to get a civil rights plank on which he can stand in the big Northern states.

IF, IN SPITE of his handicaps, Nixon manages to be elected, he will face the problem of how to govern with a Democratic Congress. Eisenhower has had to do this, and no doubt, the world would not come to an end if Nixon had to do it. But almost certainly it is true that the country would be in for a troubled time.

As President in dealing with a Democratic Congress, Nixon would differ from Eisenhower in two main respects. The first, which is obvious, is that he is not Eisenhower, that he is not a world figure, that he is not above the Party battle, and that he does not inspire instinctive popular affection. The second, which is somewhat less obvious, is that in the fifties the country was weary of the effort and exertions of the New Deal and of the two wars. It was not too difficult to be the national leader on a policy of doing as little as possible in a time when nobody wanted to do very much. But we are now in the sixties, and as Nixon and Rockefeller both know, there are a great many things which will have to be done. It would be much harder for Nixon to lead a Democratic Congress affirmatively than it has been for Eisenhower to hold it down negatively.

THIS question of Nixon's prospect as an effective national leader in a divided Government we shall see. I think one of the main issues of the coming campaign.

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