

## Optimism After 1967 Elections

**T**he 1967 elections present many heartening features. The main trend shining through is the confirmation of all recent public opinion polls: the disastrous plummeting of support for the Johnson administration. Never in recent history has a president been so mistrusted, deplored, and reviled by all segments of the population; his popularity has reached an all-time low in the polls.

Confirmation of this trend by the elections is clear: In New Jersey, for example, where Governor Richard Hughes has been closely identified with the Johnson Administration, a 2-1 Democratic majority in the legislature has been turned around to a phenomenal 3-1 Republican margin. In Kentucky, Louie Nunn has become the first Republic governor in decades, giving the Republican party a majority of the nation's governors. Nunn's main campaign thrust was opposition to the administration's war in Vietnam, and it is clear that the Vietnam war has played a large, if not dominant, role in the growing repudiation of the President. Contrary to most of the interpretation in the press, the 33 percent vote in the San Francisco referendum for immediate withdrawal from Vietnam is a victory for the anti-war forces: for this is a position too advanced for a large part of the Vietnam critics, much less the general population.

On the other great issue of our epoch — the race question — the elections, again contrary to the press, were a repudiation of the administration.

For while it is true that the Negroes Carl Stokes and Richard Hatcher won the mayoralty races in Cleveland and in Gary, Indiana, with the blessings of the administration, the important point is that they squeaked through in overwhelmingly Democratic cities. All this points up the Democratic collapse and the continuing Republican resurgence.

And in New York the voters of the state delivered a smashing 3 to 1 repudiation of the proposed state Constitution. The vote was an unofficial alliance of left and right against the center, headed by the Democratic Party of New York State; the Constitution would have prevented voters from passing on state bond issues, and would have given state aid to private and parochial schools.

Finally, to complete the picture of Democratic disarray and disintegration, the conscientious Senator Eugene McCarthy (D., Minn.) is reportedly getting ready to challenge President Johnson in the 1968 primaries — a remarkable step, growing out of the increasing despair of thoughtful Democrats at the escalating road to ruin in Vietnam.

In the midst of this picture, all the Republicans need do is to present a reasonable choice in 1968 to gain victory. But the curious situation is that there is no leading Republican candidate for the presidency who reflects in any way the growing public disgust with the war in Vietnam, or even the growing peace sentiment (led by the powerful Senator Thruston Morton, R., Ky.) within the party itself.

Clearly the Republican way to victory next year is the same as Eisenhower's "I Will Go to Korea" pledge in 1952; with that pledge, Ike established himself as the peace candidate, a peace that he indeed brought about as soon as he took office.

But every leading candidate for 1968 either endorses the Johnson war or wants to escalate it still further — all except Governor [George W.] Romney, who seems invincibly confused on the whole question. The only peaceish candidates are Senators [Mark] Hatfield (R., Ore.) and [Charles] Percy (R., Ill.) and General [James M.] Gavin, all the darkest of dark horses.

And so the Republican Party might well continue to nourish its almost uninterrupted genius for self-destruction.