

Governor Shivers' Renomination Decisive

The people of Texas spoke decisively at the ballot box in nominating Governor Shivers for a third elective term and rejecting for a second time the bid of his challenger, Ralph Yarborough, for the governorship. There was decisiveness both in the volume of the voting—unprecedented for any primary in Texas—and in the margin of victory given Governor Shivers. The size of the vote was a surprise to even the most sanguine and the Shivers margin was greater than even his most optimistic supporters dared to hope.

Still, on a numerical basis, it will go down in the records as an extremely close primary. A difference of 95,000 votes or less out of a total of nearly a million and a half can not be considered as other than close even though there was little doubt about the outcome from the moment the tallying of the ballots started. The outcome was convincing evidence of the effect of the stay-at-home vote in the first primary. Had that vote been registered on July 24, it seems almost certain that no runoff would have been necessary. That would have saved a great deal of effort, a great deal of campaigning that added little or nothing to the enlightenment of the voters on genuine public issues, a great deal of expense, and a great deal of bitterness.

From all indications, the great majority of the stay-at-home vote in the first primary would have gone to Governor Shivers if it had been cast. Some votes undoubtedly were changed in the runoff campaign, but practical politicians are likely to ascribe the Shivers showing in the final voting chiefly to strenuous organizational work to get the voters to the polls. The result tended to bear out the belief that a majority of Texans favored Governor Shivers if they could be induced to register their choice at the ballot box.

Political analysts, especially those from distant states, may be baffled in their effort to assign specific reasons for the primary outcome. A great many words were written by out-of-state commentators in advance of the election in an attempt to picture it as purely a liberal-conservative battle. The division between liberals and conservatives was

involved, of course, but it was not a clear-cut and certainly not an exclusive issue. The issue of Governor Shivers' support of President Eisenhower figured in the campaign, but there was such a welter of other issues that it would be impossible to single out any one as mainly affecting the outcome.

Nonetheless, outsiders will examine the results of the Texas voting for its national implications and its effect upon the future complexion of the Democratic Party. For weeks they have been saying that primary victories by the "liberal" faction in such Democratic states as Alabama and North Carolina indicate a waning of conservative strength in the South and a return to regularity in the Democratic Party. Actually, there never has been any doubt that the South was Democratic, but the renomination of Governor Shivers will force a considerable revision in this analysis of trends.

The fact that the conservative element won control of the party machinery in Texas in the conventions following the first primary sets Governor Shivers up as a factor that Northern liberal leaders of the Democratic Party must reckon with in the 1956 presidential nominating convention. Texas and the South can not be counted upon as willing to accept without a struggle any policy or candidate the Northern wing of the party may choose to foist upon them. Under the Shivers leadership, the South could be a decisive factor in the choice of the 1956 Democratic presidential nominee.

Mr. Yarborough, the defeated candidate, waged a hard-hitting campaign. One of his most frequent and characteristic campaign expressions was "I hold in my hand"—as he waved a paper purportedly proving the charge he happened at that moment to be making against Governor Shivers.

Governor Shivers holds in his hand today a vote of confidence from the people of Texas. He holds in his hand a new commission as governor and a mandate to carry on his sound administration of the Texas government for the next two years. It is he, and not Ralph Yarborough, who next January will hold up his hand and subscribe to the solemn oath of office which a governor takes.