

(continuation of front page story on LBJ's announcement of 31 March 1968 that he would not run)

NS STATES-ITEM

Hopefuls Rocked By LBJ's Action

Continued from Front Page

sing, cheer and applaud the President's decision.

REP. ROMAN C. Pucinski, D-Ill., expressed conviction that Johnson would be drafted at the Democratic nominating convention in August.

But the President himself, at an impromptu news conference after voicing his emotion-packed announcement, termed his decision "completely irrevocable."

This is the phrase Johnson used to try to dispel any suspicion he might change his mind or yield to a draft.

He also suggested he would not attempt to influence his party's selection of a nominee.

A MAN OF MANY surprises Johnson's announcement was his most stunning move in a 37-year career in politics. No president eligible to succeed himself has spurned a fight for the office since Harry S. Truman bowed out in 1952 during the controversial Korean War.

Johnson attributed his decision—which aides said was a year in the making—to controversies rending the nation at this time, including the Vietnam war.

"There is division in the American house now," he said in solemn tones. "There is divisiveness among us all tonight."

Then, after appealing to all Americans "to guard against divisiveness and all its ugly consequences," he came to the key passages:

"... I have concluded that I should not permit the presidency to become involved in the partisan divisions that are developing in this political year.

"With America's sons in the fields far away, with America's future under challenge right here at home, with our hopes and the world's hopes for peace in the balance every day, I do not believe that I should devote an hour or a day of my time to any personal partisan causes or to any duties other than the awesome duties of this office—the Presidency of your country.

"Accordingly, I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President."

Johnson tacked the disclosure of his decision onto a major Vietnam policy speech in which he announced his broadest-yet peace move:

An immediate and indefinite halt in most air and sea bombardment of North Vietnam as "the first step to de-escalate the conflict."

This military decision, momentous as it was, quickly was overshadowed by the postscript to his speech, which was not included in the prepared text distributed to newsmen in advance.

WITHIN HALF an hour after Johnson finished speaking, small knots of young people turned out to cheer in a light drizzle in front of the White House. One group from George Washington University carried a bedsheet on which they had hastily lettered the legend, "Thanks L. B. J."

When the President met with newsmen just before midnight, the questions came quickly:

Was Kennedy's entry into the Democratic primary campaign a factor?

"—IT ADDED to the general situation I talked about that existed in the country."

Did he have a personal choice for the Democratic presidential nomination?

—"I made that clear in the speech"—an apparent allusion to his statement that he had no time for partisan causes.

Would he support any Democratic ticket nominated at the party's August convention?

"—WHEN THE TIME comes I'll make my announcements."

Would his decision strengthen his hand in efforts to end the Vietnam war.

—"I would hope what I did tonight will let me concentrate more effectively on bringing about peace in the world."