

# The Nixon Celebration

By JAMES RESTON

MIAMI BEACH—This year's Republican convention is mainly a big anniversary party for Richard Nixon, and even his old competitors for political leadership, Governor Rockefeller on the left and Governor Reagan on the right, are joining in the fun.

Mr. Nixon has outmaneuvered and outstayed them all. It is twenty years since he accepted the Vice-Presidential nomination of his party, and now, on the verge of his sixtieth birthday, he will accept its Presidential nomination for the third time, looking more fit and seeming more serene and happy than ever before.

Serenity and happiness have never been his most intimate companions. Even now, at the pinnacle of his power, something holds him back from that plain speaking and personal trust that bind a good political partnership together. But at least here in Miami Beach, and at last after all these years, he will finally get not only the nomination but the affection of his party.

This is perhaps the most interesting aspect of this particular convention. The ideological gap between Mr. Nixon and most of the Republican delegates here is probably greater today than it was in 1952 when he was picked as Vice President because he was a symbol of the growing power of youth, California and anti-Communism.

He has obviously changed more on both foreign and domestic policy than the Republicans here on the floor. Only 5 per cent of the G.O.P. delegates are willing to tell the pollsters that they are now "liberal," but almost all of them accept—or prefer not to think about—Mr. Nixon's spectacular switch to wage and price controls, record peacetime budget deficits, guaranteed annual wages for the poor at home and accommodations with the Communists abroad.

Nevertheless, politics is the art of seizing and holding political power, and Mr. Nixon is very good at it. The conservative Republicans may not like to see him succeed by adopting policies they fought against in the forties and fifties and he used to win the Vice-Presidency twenty years ago, but nobody admires success more than the Republican conservatives.

Obviously, Richard Nixon has achieved political success. He has survived while all the others who were around when he first came to Washington as a minor official in Franklin Roosevelt's Office of Price Administration have died, or retired or dropped out of the race.

Even Harry Truman out there in Independence, Mo., and Lyndon Johnson, more worried about his health

## MIAMI BEACH

down there in Texas than is generally realized, not to mention Mr. Nixon's contemporaries in the House and Senate in the forties and early fifties, respect his endurance and political skill. So it is no wonder that the delegates here are more enthusiastic about him than at any time since he came into national politics.

By capturing the center of the American political struggle, which the Democrats held for so long and Senator McGovern gave up in a fit of absent-mindedness, Mr. Nixon has proved he was an astute and maybe even a great politician. The question now is whether he will be a great President.

When he accepted the Presidential nomination here four years ago, he said that America needed leaders to "match the greatness of her people." The "great question," he said then, was "whether we shall continue for four more years the policies of the last five years." Then he defined his answer to the question:

"When," he said, "the strongest nation in the world can be tied down for four years by a war with no end in sight;

"When the richest nation in the world can't manage its own economy;

"When the nation with the greatest tradition of the rule of law is plagued by unprecedented lawlessness;

"When the President of the United States cannot travel abroad or to any major city at home without fear of a hostile demonstration—then it is time for new leadership in America."

Well, Mr. Nixon deserves the respect and finally—what he desires most—the affection of his party, for he has dealt brilliantly with the politics of his Presidential problems. But the problems remain.

The war, the unemployment, the inflation and the lawlessness are still with us, and the National Guard is mobilized here right out of town, just in case.

"The party that can unite itself," Mr. Nixon said here on Aug. 8, 1968, "will unite America." But it hasn't happened. He has achieved the political half of his mission. He has won the allegiance of his party and divided the Democrats, who have virtually dismembered themselves in the struggle—and for the moment that's enough for the Republicans to celebrate in Miami Beach—but the real question now lies before Mr. Nixon. He has dealt with adversity very well: How will he do now that he has the affection of his party and the hope of a still divided and troubled nation?