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Election Analysis

Desire for Change Shown

By DAVID SNYDER

In the final analysis, the people of New Orleans apparently decided they wanted change in city government, and that Moon Landrieu, more than James E. Fitzmorris Jr. represented that change.

It is difficult, otherwise, to explain the coalition that gave Landrieu an almost unbelievable 54 per cent of the vote in Saturday's Democratic runoff election.

IT IS NOT so difficult to explain the overwhelming black vote which Landrieu received (more than 90 per cent) because Landrieu campaigned actively for it.

And although Fitzmorris sought the black vote and had the backing of some black community leadership, he was reluctant to do what was expected of him by that segment of the electorate.

He did not, for instance, back Ernest N. Morial, a Negro, for councilman-at-large. Instead, Fitzmorris placed Joseph DiRosa, Morial's opponent, on his ticket.

THERE WAS ALSO Fitzmorris' stand on the possibility of a black department head at city hall, and his statements

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on a public accommodation ordinance. On both issues, the black community judged Landrieu to be more positive.

In any case, the Negro community made its decision, and its strength was evident. Morial ran an extremely strong race, indicating that he not only picked up the black electorate, but also received a considerable number of white votes.

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But the black vote is not the whole story, by any means. Landrieu carried all but four wards. In some of Wards he won, such as Fourteen, uptown, and Fifteen, on the West Bank, the voters are predominantly white and traditionally conservative.

PRECINCTS PEGGED as conservatives by the analysts fell to Landrieu. Conservative precincts along St. Charles avenue, where Mayor Victor H. Schiro had beaten Fitzmorris four years ago, were won by Landrieu this time.

In Gentilly Woods, generally labeled conservative and middle class, Fitzmorris won, but Landrieu ate into his first primary lead tremendously. In precinct 30 of Ward 9, for instance, Fitzmorris increased his vote by 46 while Landrieu gained 76 votes.

Time after time, in precincts all over the city, Landrieu scooped up virtually all of the vote of the beaten first primary candidates while Fitzmorris virtually stood still.

Approximately 75,000 votes went to losing candidates in the first primary. Landrieu pulled from this huge body of votes at the rate of 3 to 1 over Fitzmorris.

IT IS TRUE that Fitzmorris received about 60 per cent of the white vote. But Landrieu polled a very respectable 40 per cent.

Ironically, it would appear that Fitzmorris might have been hurt by the very fact that so many people thought he would win. In some areas his own vote did not turn out as well as it did in the first primary.

In winning, Landrieu probably changed New Orleans politics forever. He did everything that candidates have not done in the past, and he survived and prospered. For

instance:

HE TALKED ABOUT a new tax to solve the city's financial problems.

—HE PROMISED a forceful program aimed at equalization of assessments.

—HE PROMISED to work for a strong public accommodation ordinance.

—HE ENDORSED a Negro candidate for office.

—HE SAID HE would hope to appoint a Negro to head a city department.

Landrieu, in running straight at the issues, did everything a candidate in New Orleans generally shies away from, and still won by a huge (by political standards) 54 per cent of the vote.

In fairness to all, the circumstances which enabled Landrieu to talk about the things that are really hurting the city came about because the news media and organizations such as the Metropolitan Area Committee and the League of Women Voters did a job in educating. But it was ultimately Landrieu's decision to take the plunge.

ONE THING IS clear from the election. There will probably never be another race for mayor where one candidate does not actively seek the black vote.

For this reason, it is likely that the black vote will be more evenly split in the future.

It seems clear, too, that the old political organizations are on the way out. Fitzmorris had them all, including the Crescent City Democratic Association and the Old Regulars, and he lost.

Political organizations will be around in the future, but they will be political action organizations like SOUL.

IN THE FINAL analysis, it would appear that the television simulcast debate and the ensuing controversy involving the Metropolitan Crime Commission had little effect on the election.

Landrieu scored heavily in the lakefront precincts where Fitzmorris was supposed to swamp him, and where, history shows, voters have been conservative.

In the heart of the conservative Fourteenth Ward, he carried Pct. 14, where William J. Guste makes his home, and Pct. 13, next door.

IF HE DIDN'T win many of the precincts, Landrieu multiplied his first primary vote and ran strong in uptown riverfront baliwicks where the old line City Hall-oriented political organizations are strongest.

There were many reasons for Landrieu's victory, but the final answer seems to lie in the frame of mind of the voters.

Landrieu challenged the voters with change and—black and white — the voters apparently have accepted that challenge.