

# New Orleans May Get Liberal Mayor

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The first thing that the City Council president, Moon Landrieu, did after winning the Democratic nomination for Mayor of New Orleans was to push through the council a public accommodations ordinance.

The council adopted in unanimously and the bars and other small businesses (except barber and beauty shops) of this conservative city are open to all races.

The change was accepted with only a ripple of opposition, partly because of its obvious benefit to tourism, but also in large measure because of Mr. Landrieu.

He had endorsed the ordinance strongly as part of his election platform. He had also promised to appoint Negroes as heads of several city departments.

After that, no one was surprised when he got 88.4 per cent of the black vote in the run-off Primary Dec. 13. There was considerable surprise when he got 39.1 per cent of the white vote, as well. He upset the conservative favorite, James E. Fitzmorris Jr., by taking 53.8 per cent of the total vote.

### Favored to Win April 7

Mr. Landrieu is heavily favored to win the general election April 7, even though he probably will face Republican opposition.

People here have been asking themselves with great puzzlement how they happened to nominate an avowed racial liberal to run the city. Even Mr. Landrieu's fellow liberals, who are not numerous, were astonished at his victory.

Several explanations have been offered, including the electorate's presumed desire for a change at City Hall and Mr. Fitzmorris's handicap of being identified with the present administration headed by Mayor Victor H. Schiro.

Mr. Landrieu is 39 years old. Mr. Fitzmorris is 49—and he is thought of as a reform figure. He also had to endorsement of both daily newspapers.

### Liberal-to-Moderate Image

But there have to be other reasons to explain his triumph, and one seems to be his reputation for candor. He made no attempt to camouflage his feelings on the race issue, or to deal with Negroes out of sight while portraying himself as a conservative among whites.

He has never been known as anything but a liberal or a moderate since he has been in politics. His reputation was created in 1962 during the New Orleans school desegregation crisis, when he emerged as the only member of the Louisiana legislature to stand up day after day against Gov. Jimmie Davis's attempt to take over the public schools here.



United Press International  
Moon Landrieu

er day against Gov. Jimmie Davis's attempt to take over the public schools here.

His legislative stand apparently cost him his next election, when he left the legislature and tried to become a councilman at large in 1962. But he ran for the legislature again in 1964 and won by a 5-to-1 margin. He has been in public office since.

His success in the Mayor's race is also easier to understand if this city's reputation as one of the most conservative of the Southern cities is put in perspective. It is still conservative in many ways, notably in its social life and its attitude toward the rest of the world.

But almost all of the major cities of this region are rapidly becoming more American than Southern. The political nature of New Orleans is now more like Cleveland's than Bogalusa's.

### Population Half Black

Mr. Landrieu might preside over New Orleans at the point in its history when it becomes a predominantly black city, the same can be said of Atlanta's new liberal Mayor, Sam Massell Jr., and his city.

New Orleans population is now almost half black. Its registered voters are about 30 per cent Negro, which means that Negro registration and political influence have no way to go but up.

Negroes are less happy here than some white leaders believe them to be, and therein lies one of the main problems that Mr. Landrieu will face if he wins the general election. Negroes are becoming increasingly discontented about such things as police brutality and poverty.

Add to that an increase in

crime, an inequitable and corrupting property tax system, an almost scandalous shortage of public revenues, a floundering public school system, industrial and economic stagnation, and an ingrown social elite that is proudly aloof from serious political affairs, then combine those and a score of lesser problems into what Louisianians would call a Creole gumbo if the subject were more palatable, and one gets a notion of the task facing the next Mayor of New Orleans.

Mr. Landrieu (who was born Maurice E. but legally switched to his boyhood nickname) is being compared in some circles to the late deLesseps S. Morrison, the city's famous reform Mayor of the 1940's and 1950's.

Mr. Landrieu was nominated with much the same kind of coalition of blacks and well-to-do whites who made up Mr. Morrison's formidable base of support.

### Reform Again Is Sought

Reform is in the air again, prompted not so much by political corruption, which Mr. Morrison turned into an overriding issue, as by a general dissatisfaction with the city's leaders and what is interpreted as their sluggish efforts at solving the city's problems.

However, there has been a decline in the old nonpolitical reform psychology that apparently created a distrust of legitimate politics here in the 1950's. Mr. Landrieu and his supporters are unabashedly political, no matter how they might jest about their "amateur" campaign organization.

In addition, Mr. Landrieu is not the "establishment" figure that Mr. Morrison was. Mr. Landrieu's parents, Roman Catholics of modest means, operated a neighborhood grocery store in the front of their house. He is not a member of the Boston Club, where the elite see each other daily. He is never likely to rise to the eminence of King of Carnival, no matter how successful he might become in politics.

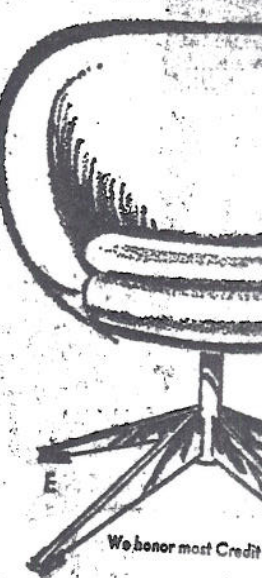
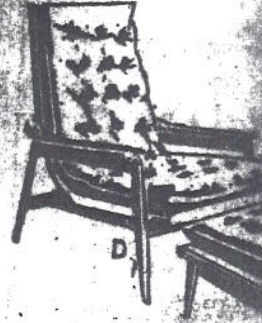
Some younger New Orleans residents see Mr. Landrieu's social insignificance as an advantage. They hope that he might inspire a closer balance between public concerns and the engulfing social life that has dominated the city for 252 years.

That would be an uphill fight. The December primary is almost forgotten already as the city turns its attention to the carnival season.

Mardi Gras will arrive Feb. 10, and in the whirl of balls and pageants that are already under way, Moon Landrieu gives the impression of being the only man in town who still has his mind on politics.

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