

# Thieu May Be Unopposed in Wake of House Vote

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, June 3—In the South Vietnamese Presidential election of 1967, there were 11 candidates, and Nguyen Van Thieu won with only 35 per cent of the vote. In the election on Oct. 3, it appears, the president may have only one opponent, or may even run unopposed, under a bill passed today by the lower house of the South Vietnamese National Assembly.

The measure would require Presidential candidates to have the endorsement of at least 40 legislators or 100 members of provincial or city councils, about one-fifth of the total of either category of officeholders.

This would be easy for President Thieu, who controls a majority of the legislature and of the provincial councils, but would apparently be difficult for anyone else.

## Neither Expresses Reaction

Neither of his two major challengers, Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky or Maj. Gen. Duong Van Minh, expressed any reaction today. But Mr. Ky's supporters voiced doubt earlier that he could qualify as a candidate under the restrictive rules.

Many here believe that General Minh might be able to round up the required support, but he has hinted that he would run only if the elections are fair and has said that he considers the restrictions unconstitutional.

The President, who was irked

by the size of his vote in 1967, backed the restrictive clause in the new legislation to get what his supporters termed a clear-cut decision in October. His critics, however, charged that he was trying to keep other candidates out of the race.

Shortly after 1 o'clock this afternoon, 101 of the 122 deputies present in the House of Representatives rose to give their approval to the electoral law, voting down amendments introduced by the Senate to delete the restrictive clause.

This vote sends the bill, which also lays down conditions for legislative elections in August, to the President.

Under the Constitution, it becomes law in 30 days unless he amends it. If he does, the votes of more than half the members of both houses sitting in joint session would be needed to override the amendment.

## Possibility of a Gesture

There is believed to be a remote possibility that President Thieu, as a gesture of conciliation, could offer to remove the

restrictions, but that seemed unlikely. The possibility that he might be the only Presidential candidate is permissible under the South Vietnamese Constitution, but, it is believed, would be embarrassing to the Americans.

Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker said in an interview last month, "It's important that whoever is elected should be elected in a fair election, if they are going to be able to govern effectively."

One group of Opposition deputies in the lower house charged that before the vote on the electoral law a Saigon official had offered to free a jailed deputy in exchange for their support of the restrictive clause.

The jailed deputy, Ngo Cong Duc, has been held on charges of attempted murder after a fight with the chairman of a provincial council in the Mekong Delta. Mr. Duc insists that he was charged unfairly, and this afternoon 91 deputies sent President Thieu a demand that he be freed.