

Some Landslide Lessons

WASHINGTON—Richard Nixon is a cautious man, a conservative man, but also an extremely flexible and pragmatic man. He is a student of the political past with an astute eye upon the political future.

Although he will ride into a second term on the wave of one of the most remarkable landslides in the history of the presidency, Nixon also must be pondering at this point the problems that beset the only three of his predecessors who also won more than 60 percent of the popular vote.

FIRST, THERE WAS Warren Harding who soundly trounced James Cox in 1920 with 60.4 percent of the vote and then watched his administration dissolve in a mire of corruption before his death in 1923.

Next came Franklin Roosevelt. After defeating Alfred M. Landon in 1936 with 60.8 percent of the vote, Roosevelt proposed a Supreme Court packing deal designed to win more favorable judicial approval for New Deal legislation.

In the ensuing congressional battle, Roosevelt lost not only his plan for an enlarged court but also almost any impetus he had for further domestic economic and social reform.

Then there was Lyndon Johnson who swamped Barry Goldwater in 1964 with 61.1 percent of the vote. Johnson passed a monumental legislative program in 1965, but as he became embroiled in the Vietnam War his standing both in the Congress and with the public suffered deep erosion.

Each of these Presidents had great

goals in mind as he savored victory on election night. Harding intended to return the nation to "normalcy" in the wake of World War I. Roosevelt planned to move more boldly along the road to reform. Johnson expected to win the war on poverty and improve the lot of the average citizen.

In varying degrees, their dreams and objectives were destroyed by events they had not anticipated or which they could not control.

These are lessons that have not escaped a man as adroit at politics and as well versed in history as Richard Nixon. He could not win a Republican Congress in 1972, even with 61 percent of the popular vote. And if the old law of political attrition for the party of the President prevails in 1974, he will find himself faced during his last two years in office with even larger Democratic majorities in House and Senate.

AGAINST SUCH a background, Nixon almost certainly will move with cautious dexterity into his second term. His objectives are to build peace with honor throughout the world and a new prosperity "with progress for all Americans" at home.

But he cannot deliberately antagonize a Congress that remains in Democratic hands. He cannot permit partisanship to prevail over statesmanship. He cannot let the economy slide backward into a morass of recession and inflation nor can he allow party functionaries to repeat such scandalous activities as the Watergate break-in.