

The Choice of a Candidate

The New York Times, speaking as an independent newspaper, today announces its support of John F. Kennedy for President. Two considerations have carried special weight in determining our judgment. One of these is a matter of foreign policy. The other is a question of assuring a unified direction of the nation's affairs at a difficult moment in history.

In the field of foreign policy we find it a cause of deep satisfaction that, despite their sharp dispute over Quemoy and Matsu, the two candidates are in substantial agreement over a wide range of important issues. Both are aware of the nature and dimensions of the imperialist-Communist threat. Both want a stronger national defense and more effective aid to the under-developed nations. Both are prepared to resist, by force if necessary, any attempt by Soviet Russia to drive us from Berlin.

This large measure of agreement guarantees a continuity of the main lines of American foreign policy and offers welcome assurance to our NATO allies and to the small nations which look to us for support in their efforts to safeguard their newly acquired independence.

As for Quemoy and Matsu, it is unfortunate that this issue has been brought into the campaign. When questioned about it, both candidates ought to have stood on the policy expressed by Congress in its Joint Resolution of Jan. 29, 1955, a policy to which both of them have now wisely retreated after having taken more extreme positions in direct opposition to each other. There are far more important questions of foreign policy than Quemoy and Matsu, but the debate over the offshore islands did throw a revealing light on differences of judgment on the part of the two candidates.

Senator Kennedy made it clear that he would not go to war with Communist China solely for the "principle" of defending two islands immediately adjacent to the Chinese mainland, for to do so would be "unsound militarily, unnecessary to our security and unsupported by our allies." But the Vice President, who in a sense had to be rescued from his original position by the President, made statements—such as the one that he would not surrender "one inch of free territory" to the Communists—that carry implications reaching far beyond Quemoy and Matsu and, in fact, extending to the whole range of American foreign policy.

There are large areas of the world—particularly in Southeastern Asia—where ideological conflict between communism and anti-communism may break out at any moment into local warfare. Are we, as Mr. Nixon indicates, to use American manpower to prevent the loss of "one inch of free territory" in such areas? The choice is not so easy as Mr. Nixon implies. It involves the question of the intrinsic importance of each such area to the security of the United States, the question of allied assistance, the possible cost of American intervention in terms of American lives. The oversimplification of Mr. Nixon's sweeping declarations in these matters is not reassuring.

Senator Kennedy's approach in this as in other matters of foreign policy, except for his momentary blunder suggesting intervention in Cuba, a position from which he quickly retreated, seems to us to be more reasoned, less emotional, more flexible, less doctrinaire, more imaginative, less negative than that of the Vice President. These are intangibles, and stem less

from specific programs than from the breadth of vision of the man and of his advisers, but they are real and compelling nevertheless.

A second consideration persuading us to support the candidacy of Mr. Kennedy lies in the realities of the present political situation here at home.

There is every reason to believe that the next Senate, because of holdover members and the geographical distribution of the seats to be filled this year, will be strongly Democratic. There is almost equally good reason to believe that the House also will be Democratic. With international tensions running high and great decisions to be made, we cannot view with satisfaction the prospect of a continuation of the division of authority between Executive and Congress which has prevailed in Washington for the last six years.

With his personal warmth and widespread popular support, President Eisenhower was able to bridge this division to some extent. Mr. Nixon, we think, would be far less able to do so. A resulting deadlock could be costly. Surely this is a time when the responsibility for leadership and action should be plainly fixed and no tug-of-war between opposite ends of Pennsylvania Avenue should be permitted to jeopardize the efficient operation of the American Government.

We believe that, with the prestige of an election victory, Mr. Kennedy could override reactionary Southern opposition within his own party and consolidate an effective majority behind a constructive program. We respect his readiness to take the initiative, his resourcefulness and the major purposes at which he aims.

While thus favoring the election of a Democratic candidate, we must state frankly that there is one aspect of the Democratic campaign which gives us concern. This relates to the question of fiscal policy.

We are not disturbed by the prospect of larger Federal expenditures, as such. For one thing, both parties and both candidates agree that expenditures for national defense must be increased in view of the presumptive ability of the Soviet Union to launch a sudden nuclear attack. Moreover, quite aside from the question of national defense, we recognize that this is a growing country, with a quickened sense of social responsibility, and we have no doubt that the outflow of funds from Washington must keep pace with both the nation's birth rate and its conscience.

What concerns us, therefore, is not the strong likelihood that Federal expenditures will rise, regardless of which party wins the Presidency, but rather the question of how such a program is to be handled. The Democratic party's platform goes far beyond the Republican platform in making promises of large spending. Yet it calls at this time for "no increase in present tax rates."

This is not a reassuring prospect, since it involves the hazards of inflation, but it is fair to note that in matters of fiscal policy Mr. Kennedy himself has been one of the more prudent Democrats in Congress.

In this election, as in all elections, there are points of strength and points of weakness on both sides. As always, the choice must be made on balance. On balance, our choice is Mr. Kennedy.