

Byrd's Eye View  
A Public Service Column by  
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COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS

'Tis the season for reviewing things past and predicting things to come. With the ending of a year and the opening of a new calendar with twelve unmarked months, many persons feel moved to forecast coming events, to predict turning of tides in human fortunes, to prognosticate on national and international crises.

It does not take great acumen to foresee one coming event of special importance to all Americans -- due in accordance with Federal statutes to occur this fall -- the biennial national election. However, it does take a brave, or perhaps rash, person to predict with any conviction at this point the manner in which the American voters may act come November.

Certain factors exist which offer clues which may help solve this riddle for those whose needs require them so to do. Among these factors, of particular significance is the analysis of the American voter in the 1964 presidential election (recently released by the Bureau of the Census based on its sample survey of the civilian, noninstitutional, population of the U.S.) taken two weeks after the November election.

Who were the voters? Who stayed away from the polls?

Of those interviewed, it was estimated that 69 percent of the voting age population voted on November 3, 1964. More women than men voted; and the young people (under 25 years of age) and the elderly (75 years or older) reported the lowest exercise of their right of suffrage. Persons 45 to 64 years of age had the highest voting rate -- about three-fourths of their numbers.

An estimated 71 percent of the white population of voting age said they voted, as compared with 58 percent of the total nonwhite population.

More than 80 percent of persons 21 and over who had completed one or more years of college said they voted, while only 51 percent of those with less than an eighth grade education did so.

Unemployed men of voting age were reported as having voted to a significantly lesser extent (57 percent) than employed men (74 percent).

The amount of income a family had was shown to have a marked influence on voter participation of its members. Only one-half of all persons 21 and over living in families with incomes of less than \$2,000 were reported as voters, but 85 percent of those in families with incomes of \$10,000 or more reported voting.

It would thus appear that over-all increases in standards of living (based on income advances) and rising educational levels would act to swell the total number of voters coming to the polls. But the answer to the questions, "What will they think?", and "What will determine the manner in which they cast their votes?", will perhaps remain unknown until next November 8.

The war in Viet Nam, the state of the national economy, and individual personalities of public figures are among some of the elements likely to influence the American voter. In turn, the approaching election itself will perhaps cast its shadow well before the election date, influencing to an unknown quantity, at present, national and international events during 1966.