Both Parties Watching The Eyes Of Texas

By KENNETH CARR

For the first time in memory Texas is being watched closely by people interested in the outcome of the upcoming Presidential election.

A Democrat stronghold—which has gone Republican only in the landslide years of 1928, 1952, and 1966—Texas is used to being ignored by the candidates and leading speakers. Not so this year.

WITHIN THE past week Texas has seen three of the four candidates and heard a promise that the other, Henry Cabot Lodge, will be here later.

Besides the candidates, we have already seen the Lady Bird-Kennedy clan traveling party leaders and the leader of the GOP conservatives, Sen. Barry Goldwater (in connection with the campaign of John Tower, GOP candidate for Senate against Lyndon Johnson).

IN THE FUTURE the Republicans expect to bring back Nixon and Goldwater (each to Houston) plus Lodge and probably President Eisenhower. For the Democrats, President Truman, Sen. Estes Kefauver and National Chairman Henry Jack-

son have announced tentative or definite plans to visit the state.

Even the Constitution Party candidate, Charles Sullivan of Mississippi (who has no running mate) was in Houston this week.

TEXAS' DOUBTFUL tag stems, I feel, from a series of conflicting conditions. The most fundamental fact of Texas politics is that Texas is, basically, overwhelmingly Democrat. Also, the Democrat nominee for Vice President is a Texan. (This will help Kennedy, although far less than was originally supposed.)

On the other hand, in the past two elections many people have found that lightning does not really strike when one pulls the Republican lever.

Moreover, a surprisingly large number of people are actually reading the platforms and discussing issues. In this quite conservative state that can only hurt the Democrats.

And like it or not, the issue of religion (which cuts both ways—more Protestants than normal will vote GOP; more Roman Catholics than normal, Democrat) is a very definite factor.

KENNEDY'S VISIT was disappointing. No more than 500 or 600 unenthusiastic spectators greeted him at the airport. The crowd at the Coliseum was better (10,000), but seats were available there, too. And Kennedy's speech was vry poor.

I have talked to Kennedy supporters, Nixon supporters, and neutrals and have not yet found anyone who liked it. The abundance of it seemed to be that Texans are Democrats, so they must vote for him. It was totally devoid of issues (including his stand on the 27 1/4% oil depletion allowance which Johnson, Rayburn, and Nixon favor and the Democratic Platform opposes.

A speech of aimless generalities will not carry Texans. If he returns before November, let's hope he is more specific.