

Both Political Parties Woo Virginia Negro

RICHMOND, Va.--For the first time in history, both the Democratic and Republican parties in Virginia are openly courting the Negro vote.

This is a dramatic departure for the Democrats, a right-about-face from the policy of "massive resistance" to integration they have promoted throughout the Old Dominion in recent years. Some of the loudest white supremacy advocates of yesteryear are now softly wooing the Negro. And the Negro appears to be responding.

Illustrating the rugged competition for votes that may prove a decisive factor as early as the fall of this year, when Virginia elects a governor, are two recent developments.

In the more significant, perhaps, Clarence Townes, a Negro, was appointed assistant to state Republican chairman Robert Corber.



Clarence L. Townes Jr. was appointed to post in Republican party in Virginia.

Townes, 37, is a Richmond insurance executive.

Four days earlier, more than a dozen Negroes were welcomed at an important Democratic function--the annual Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner. They not only dined without discrimination but made the rounds of after-dinner parties. Last year, one Negro attended this dinner. He ate alone at a table for two.

Guests at the Richmond dinner included U.S. Sen. Harry Byrd, State Sen. Harry Byrd Jr., Rep. William Tuck, a former governor; Rep. Watkins Abbott and Lt. Gov. Mills Godwin Jr., all identified with the "massive resistance" movement of recent years.

Godwin personifies the "big turnabout" in Democratic circles. Once a symbol of "massive resistance" to integration, Godwin began moderating his public utterances a couple of years ago and it became clear he would seek the Democratic nomination for governor this year. He has done such a remarkable job of drawing together all factions of the party that he may become the first nominee since 1913 without even token opposition.

Veteran Sen. Byrd, 77, remained silent in the last four Presidential campaigns as the Republican nominee carried Virginia in 1952, 1956, and 1960. But his diminishing influence was noted in 1964 as leading Virginia Demo-

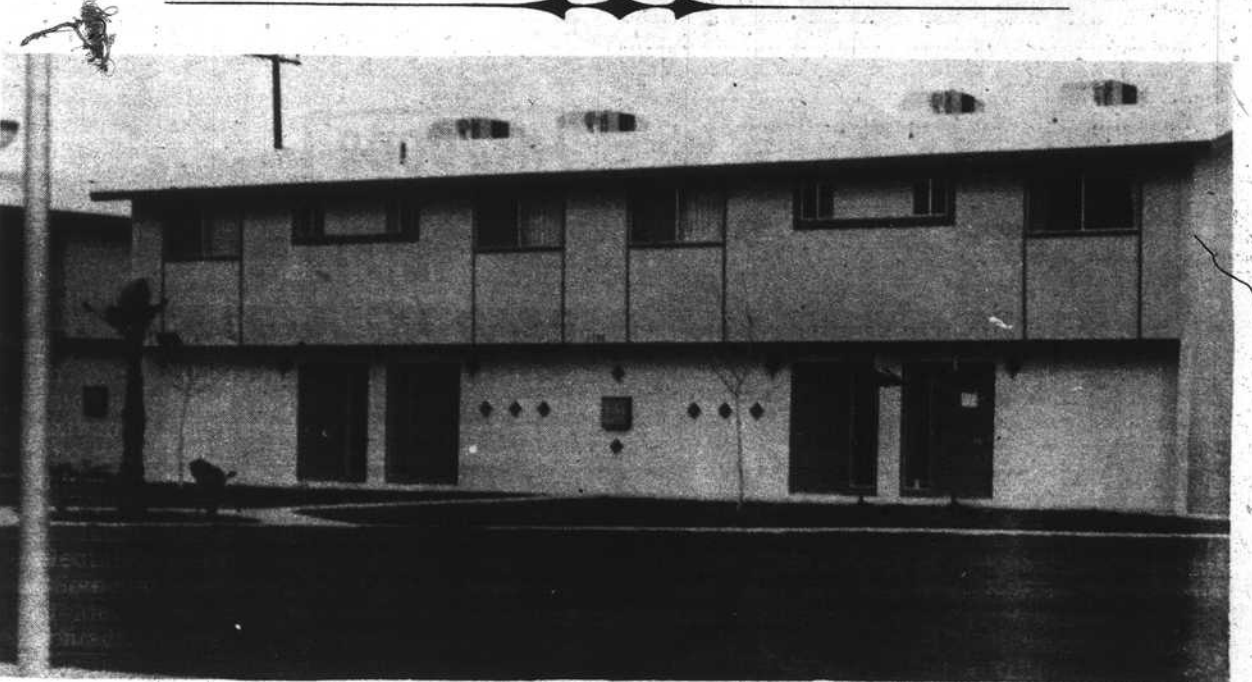
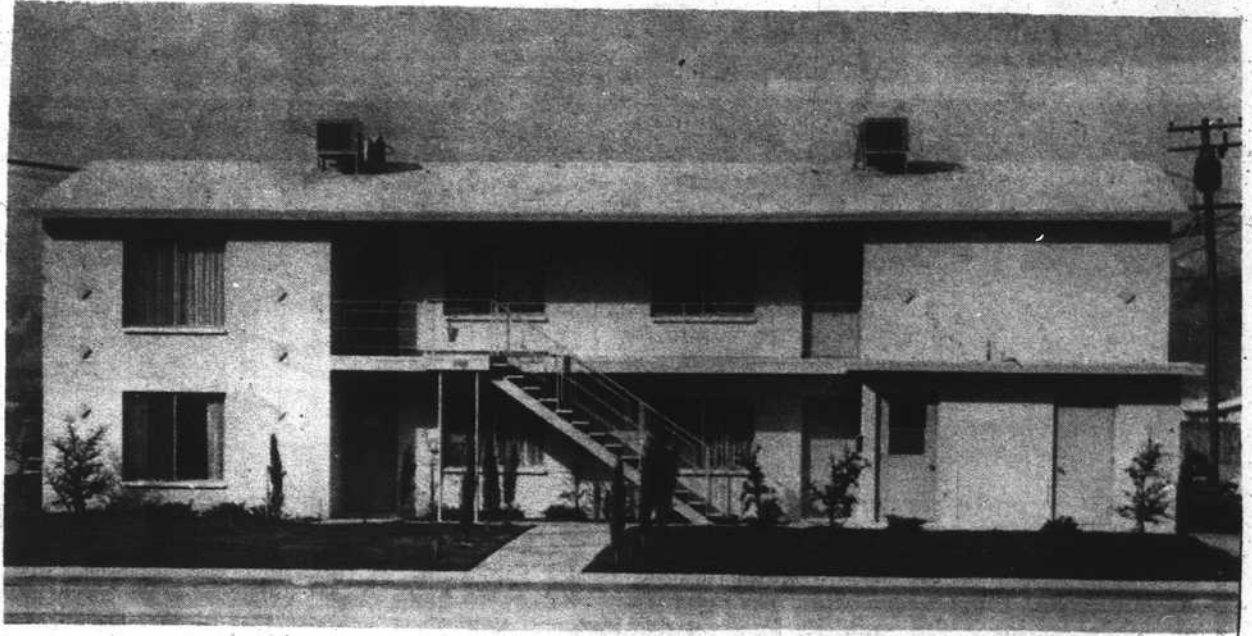
crats, including Godwin, helped President Johnson to victory in the state.

As in most Southern states, Virginia Negroes have been principally identified with the Republican party. But, as elsewhere, they defected to the national Democratic ticket last year.

The state Democratic organization, long controlled by the elder Sen. Byrd but now ap-

parently led by National Committeeman Sidney Kellam, is trying to consolidate that gain. The Republicans, as evidenced by the Townes appointment, are attempting to recoup their losses.

The stake is high as the two major parties battle for the loyalty of 150,000 Negro voters. And regardless of which party wins, the big victor is bound to be the Negro.



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