REPUBLICANS
Nixon's Steppingstones,
Reagan's TV Show
In 1964, Republican candidates searched across the land for the "mainstream." This year again the catch phrase is a'liquid' and equally elusive. The situation is 'fluid' or so maintain the augurs of Rockefeller and Reagan.

For the moment, the only one who can see solid ground ahead is Richard Nixon. And, indeed, he has found some sturdy steppingstones on the road to the Miami Beach convention. Nebraska Republicans gave him 70% of their vote and 16 delegates in last week's primary. Tennessee's Senator Howard Baker, the first of the favorite sons to express a preference, broke neutrality to support Nixon, bringing 28 probable votes. Maryland's Governor Spiro Agnew, until two months ago one of Rocky's most efficacious roosters, made it clear that Nixon no longer commanded his loyalty and that Nixon, who is dropping hints that he might look to Annapolis for a running mate, was looking harder than ever.

As Befits a Star. At the same time, Ronald Reagan's fortunes were on the rise. He moved, as befits a star of the late show, through TV. With an expenditure of about $13,500 in Nebraska, mostly for TV (v. nearly $100,000 for Nixon), and without personal appearances, Reagan captured 22% of the vote—an amazing and significant showing, as Republican Governor Norton Tiemann put it. Tiemann, to be sure, exaggerated Reagan's performance. Nebraska is a Tory turf, and Reagan's conservative theme was more enthusiastically received there than it might have elsewhere. Still, even Nixon was forced to admit that the Californian did "very well."

Reagan is not yet a serious danger to Nixon, but he might be if he can prove himself in the May 28 Oregon primary. Making the most of their leading man's telegenic appeal, the Reagan people are putting the Californian on the screen just as often as the White Knight—and nearly as often as the White Tornado. There are 20-second Reagan spots, 60-second plugs, five-minute shows, and a full half-hour program that contrasts Nixon's gubernatorial defeat in 1962 with Reagan's victory over the "unbeatable" Brown, an appellation that could come as a big surprise to Brown. The expertly produced program catches Reagan in a wide assortment of moods. He grins, laughs and frowns as the occasion dictates—but he always looks good. Reagan headquarters would dearly love to show the famous hour-long Telestar debate with Robert Kennedy—in which Bobby showed up rather badly—but CBS, the producing network, has refused permission, claiming copyright privileges. In addition, 750,000 copies of an eight-page Reagan tabloid have been distributed with the state's Sunday newspapers. In all, about $300,000 is being spent in Oregon on Reagan's non-candidacy (v. $500,000 for Nixon).

By contrast Nelson Rockefeller looked curiously lethargic. Prevented by bad weather from flying to an appearance at Pennsylvania State University in University Park last week, he holed up in the Pittsburgh Hilton, skipping an opportunity to visit with a contingent of the Poor People's Campaign, or even to talk with two of its leaders—the Rev. A. D. King, Martin Luther King Jr.'s brother, and the Rev. James Groppi, the Milwaukee militant—who were also staying at the Hilton.

"Can you imagine," asked an incredulous Pittsburgh Republican. "Hubert Humphrey or Bobby Kennedy or even Dick Nixon passing up chances like that?" Perhaps the best hope Rocke-

As often as the White Knight.

This alignment, he contended, is made up of "new" liberals, who want to shift power from Washington to local government; the black militants, who want dignity rather than Government handouts; the "new" South, which is "breaking the shackles of one-party rule"; and the "silent center," the millions of concerned but undemonstrative Americans. Though they differ on the time scale of change, all four groups are agreed on the direction they should take—at least in Nixon's view. It takes fairly sharp eyes to see a significant common denominator among these groups—and a political genius to translate it into practical politics. But the G.O.P., Nixon affirmed, is the party to lead the new "alliance" in the last third of the 20th century.