

almost weekly competition
that won't end until June 8.

Reagan and his managers
had tried hard to convince political opinion makers that running reasonably close to Ford was all that should be expected of them. But offstage, Reagan men clearly thought they had the lead and might win outright.

"I feel what's happened tonight is a victory," Reagan said after midnight, with the Republican verdict still in doubt.

"'Hogwash,'" countered Rep. James Cleveland, the Ford campaign chairman. 'A victory is a victory, particularly for an incumbent

who is making tough decisions ... against a guy who can come out of the west and make promises every day of the week.'"

There was another phase in the primary, and Ford was winning that decisively. With the vote count nearing completion, delegates backing him for the nomination led for 19 of the 21 seats New Hampshire will have at the Republican National Convention.

Carter led for 13 of the 17 Democratic delegates, Udall for four.

Howard H. Callaway, Ford's national campaign manager, said Reagan had been beaten in his strongest northern state.

Reagan said he had done better

than anyone should have expected.

They can argue about that forever — or at least until the next primary. The fact is that Ford won, in a state where Reagan enjoyed the ardent support of the dominant newspaper, the Manchester Union-Leader, the backing of Gov. Meldrim Thomson and a superior campaign organization.

Reagan was campaigning today in Illinois, which holds its primary March 16, but by nighttime, he is due in Tampa, Fla. And the New Hampshire loss may well lead him to intensify his personal campaign in Florida.

"They told us that any kind of a victory would help the President in Florida," a Ford campaign strategist said. "Well, we've given them any kind of a victory."

The Reagan ploy had been to try to hold Ford to the standard expected of elected presidents. That's what did in Lyndon B. Johnson eight years ago, when he won the New Hampshire primary but was rated a loser because he only had a seven point margin.

But Ford is not an elected President. He holds office by appointment and succession. The New Hampshire primary was his first electoral test out-

Continued on Page 192