Republican Party Chairman

Sports fans know that this is the time of year when baseball and football teams had losing records in 1976 look for new managers or new coaches.

The most highly publicized competitive event of the year was the presidential election, and the losing party is now in the throes of choosing a new manager, called the National Chairman. There are plenty of available unemployed republicans. At least a half dozen have tossed their names into the ring by announcing that they are not seeking it.

Since fewer than one-fourth of the voters call themselves Republicans, it would seem that they should concentrate on attracting new members. Liberal Republicans, however. Appear to be afflicted with a malady known in organization circles as “cannibalism.” They find it more fun to devour conservative Republicans than to go after the big game on the Democratic preserve.

The attitude of these tunnel-vision Republicans is like that of the old-time political boss who, when told that his tactics were wrecking the party, replied, “Yes, but we will own the wreckage.”

There is no stereotype that a National Chairman must fit. He can be successful if he excels in any one of several different talents. He can be issue-oriented and inspire the loyal dedication of the party faithful to put fourth their best efforts above and beyond the duty of their jobs. Ronald Reagan would probably have that capability.

Or, a National Chairman can be a politically savvy diplomat who makes it his goal to harmonize the disparate factions of the party under the slogan “u for Unity precedes V for Victory.” This was the special skill of Robert Strauss.

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Or, a National Chairman can be an articulate spokesman who knows how to make news, and who would have an effective comment on every national happening. That would be a John Conally's style.

Finally, a National Chairman can be a technician whose long suit is organization and the nuts and bolts of the elective process. Clarence Warner, Oklahoma National Committeeman, is an outstanding example of a technician who successfully gets Republican majorities in the ballot box in a democratic state.

The trouble with the liberal Republicans is that, when they had their chance, they picked a Republican National Chairman who excelled in none of these qualities and who was no match for her Democratic counterpart. Now that mary Louise Smith has resigned, the same crowd that put her in the office is spending its energies announcing who is unacceptable instead of developing constructive proposals.

The reason Jimmy Carter accomplished the tremendous task of defeating an incumbent President was not because the voters want the big domestic handouts he promised, or the increase in taxes and Federal control that must accompany these programs. Carter was elected primarily because he is a Democrat. The Democratic Party has done a better job than the Republican Party of registering voters and getting them to the polls.

The Republican Party needs a new National Chairman equipped with at least one of the four talents. It also needs a new image, a new sense of direction, and a new name. It is unlikely that any of these essentials can emerge from the same group that chose the last National Chairman and the last national candidates.

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