I!S. to the NEWS

by PHYLLIS SCHL.AFLY

Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002
Phone: 618-462-5415

RELEASE: NOVEMBER 17

NOVEMBER ELECTION LESSONS

"Go conservative, young man (or woman)" is now the slogan for the politically ambitious American, just as "go west, young man" was the watchword of a century ago. That's the message of the 1978 elections.

The big news of the November election is that the voters want to hear their candidates and officials pledging conservative fiscal policies. It doesn't seem to matter whether the voters call themselves conservatives. No matter what the ideological preferences of the voters, they still want the officials handling their tax dollars to be conservative.

It doesn't matter whether the candidates are Republican or Democratic. The conservative tide extended even to the only state that George McGovern carried in 1972, Massachusetts, where conservative Democrat Edward J. King was elected Governor. Walter Cronkite admitted that the 1978 elections gave "encouragement to right-wing Republicans" when he reported that a number of what he called "certified hard-core conservatives" were surprise winners.

The prime example of a "certified" conservative scoring an upset victory was in Iowa where Roger Jepsen defeated liberal Senator Dick Clark. Commentators had tried to belittle Jepsen by saying that his campaign speeches sounded as if he were running for Governor of the U.S. Panama Canal Zone. But Jepsen was smart enough to know that the voters liked his opposition to the surrender of the U.S. Canal to Panama.

If Senator Charles Percy's opponent had had similar good judgment, he could have won, too. But Alex Seith blew his chances to win when he responded to that issue by criticizing Percy for not coming out for the Panama Canal Treaty soon enough.

(more)

It's too bad, for the sake of the viability of the two-party system, that Republicans could not have capitalized more impressively on voter dissatisfaction with high taxes, inflation, and big government spending.

The one real hope that Republicans had to pull their party up by its bootstraps out of the lowly minority position it occupies today was to ride the wave of Proposition 13 and present the image of the party of tax cuts, balanced budgets, and cuts in federal spending. That should have been easy because fiscal responsibility has always been the traditional posture of the Republican Party. Lincoln Day orators have been viewing unbalanced budgets with alarm ever since anyone can remember.

While many Republicans made significant and even upset gains in the November election, and the party increased its percentage of Governors, Senators, and Congressmen, it failed to come across to the voters as the savior of the U.S. dollar. The reason is probably because the party's fiscal image has been so blurred through the years by liberal Republicans such as Percy, Edward Brooke, and Clifford Case.

The latter two were defeated and Percy was reelected only after he went on television with a soap-opera-style commercial reminiscent of Richard Nixon's 1952 speech about Pat's "cloth coat" (which evoked much voter sympathy and saved him from being dumped as Dwight Eisenhower's running mate). Percy humbly admitted to Illinois voters that he had made mistakes. He said, "I've got the message" and pleaded to be given another chance to go back to Washington and help cut taxes.

The Harris poll reported that the voters seem to want to cut federal spending even more than they want to cut taxes. That's a healthy sign because deficits are the principal cause of inflatio and the cheapening of our dollar is hurting Middle Americans even more than high taxes.

If the Republican Party could take over the leadership of cutting both taxes and federal spending, it could ride that issue into national dominance as efficiently as the original Republican Party rode the anti-slavery issue into the White House with Abraham Lincoln and into generations of campaign victories. The question is, will the liberal Republicans now come in out of left field and join the party?

(end)