



Clayton Fritchey

Post 9-4-71

Candidates Weigh Alternatives

THE PRESIDENCY seems to be losing a little of its gloss. There was a time when it was the supreme office a man could aspire to. Not these days. Now some of our more famous public men seem to regard it as a fallback position: Something to turn to if other opportunities are foreclosed.

Looking over the list of those who are being prominently mentioned as possible presidential candidates next year, one is struck by the number of mayors, senators, congressmen and governors who have outlived their popularity in their present jobs or face re-election problems or are in a quandary or want or need a change.

A notable example of this is Sen. Fred Harris (D-Okla.) a young senator, who, even as a first-termer was so outstanding that he was made chairman of the Democratic National Committee several years ago, and in that role initiated an impressive set of party reforms.

THE ONLY TROUBLE is that he was a little ahead of his time nationally, and apparently far ahead of his

time in his home state. So much so that Oklahoma polls showed that he had little chance for re-election next year, not because he had done too little, but too much. Hence, like a practical, sensible man, Harris bowed out of the Senate race, and instead is now campaigning for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Mayor Lindsay's story is not dissimilar. Like Harris, he has taken many controversial reformist positions, and, in the process, has burned up a lot of good will. Also, like Harris he probably could not have won his party's nomination in another race for mayor, or any other office. So he quit the GOP, and is now prepared to settle for the presidency if nothing better turns up.

Some of the advisers, of course, feel he shouldn't commit himself to seeking the Democratic presidential nomination on the grounds that, if he plays his cards right, he might become the next Democratic governor of New York. Their argument is that if Lindsay should be defeated for governor, he

can still run for President in 1976 if worst comes to worst.

Out in Los Angeles, another lively, controversial mayor, the ineffable Sam Yorty, apparently has come to the conclusion that his days may be numbered in his home town. So, in looking around for alternatives, he, too, has hit on the presidency, and is looking over the Democratic primaries for opportunities.

Even as Lindsay, Rep. Paul McCloskey (R-Calif.) is also rapidly becoming persona non grata with fellow Republicans. He, of course, is up for re-election next year, but GOP wrath does not worry him, for he has a fallback position if he loses his House seat in a congressional primary fight. After all, he is going to run against Richard Nixon for the Republican presidential nomination next year, so if he doesn't make it back to Capitol Hill, there's always the White House.

THE PLOT, naturally, will thicken, if Sen. Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.) also decides to enter the primary lists against Mr. Nixon. Reports from Oregon indicate that Hatfield, who is up for

re-election, next year, has alienated many Old Guard Republicans back home with his forthright anti-administration stands. Like his colleague, Sen. Harris, he may draw down and run for the Presidency instead.

On the Democratic side, there is also Rep. William R. Anderson of Tennessee, who is in trouble in his fundamental constituency for defending the constitutional rights of the Berrigan brothers when J. Edgar Hoover charged them with conspiracy before any indictments had been returned. A newly organized committee, called Friends of William Anderson, is now talking up the former nuclear submarine commander for President.

Finally, of course, there is Gov. George Wallace. Since under Alabama law he cannot succeed himself as governor again, the poor fellow really has no choice but to run for the only office available to him next year, which is the White House. Will all this put ideas into Spiro Agnew's head? If he is going to be dumped, why not do what the other dumptees are doing—run for President?

© 1971, Newsday, Inc.