

San Diego's Reaction: Who Needs the GOP?

SAN DIEGO — (UPI) — The man-on-the street reaction today to losing the GOP national convention was: "Who needs it?"

There was a good deal of sour grapes in that response, a hurt pride at being designated a convention site, then blowing the sure thing.

There were others, like Leon Parma, head of the host San Diego Civic Committee, who said he was "sad, sorry and disappointed" and certain the city could have done a magnificent job had it not been for the intransigence of a Canadian promoter.

Bitter

The Republican National Committee came in for bitter words for "lack of communication" and high-handedness from the start and then its sudden and surprise decision to abandon San Diego.

County Chairman Leslie Gehres said he thought some national party leaders were "just plain chicken," and let the ITT contribution controversy affect the move.

And there was the unhappy job of winding down a convention — of deciding what to do with the thousands of elephant-shaped bells the city was going to give to the delegates, the matchbook covers, the hotel rooms contracted for, the cars leased, furniture purchased, parties arranged, the 2000 letters of thanks and regret to the volunteers.

When word finally came yesterday that the City Council in Miami Beach had voted 4-3 to invite the Republicans there in August, the near-universal public comment was: "We never wanted it in the first place."

Parma takes the position that the publicity over the agreement of ITT-Sheraton to contribute up to \$400,000 to convention costs was not a factor in moving from San Diego.

There are not many who agree.

Southern California Democratic chairman Larry Lawrence says he doesn't see how anyone can argue that the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings over ITT didn't leave "a taint."

Consensus

The consensus seems to be that the decision to move was made at the highest level, perhaps by John Mitchell, Nixon's campaign manager.

The reasons were varied — the demands of the hard-nosed Canadian businessman Peter Graham, the worry about hotel space, the community's obvious fears about protest demonstrations and violence, and the ITT affair.

Letters to the editor in the San Diego Union and Tribune had been running almost 90 percent anti-convention even before the first hint in March that the advisability of holding it here was in doubt. After-

wards, that percentage increased.

Most writers said they feared a repetition of the violent street scenes of Chicago in 1968. Others had the theme that San Diego does not need to grow, the fervent desire that it never becomes another Los Angeles.

But the biggest question was why San Diego got the convention, then lost it.

Parma put the blame entirely on Graham, who owns the sports arena which was to have been the convention assembly hall.

Parma said Graham, who spends much of his time in Vancouver, originally agreed to \$49,000 to lease the arena for a week and later began making additional demands which finally would have cost more than \$400,000.

Additions

Among them was another rent hike, the construction of new box offices, installation of permanent TV anchor booths suspended from the ceiling and a permanent closed circuit TV network to the concourse.

At any rate, when the huge red, white and blue banner which proclaimed the Royal Inn the "1972 GOP convention center" was taken down, the girl at the reception desk was glad.

"A week ago when about 200 wild-eyed people came storming through this lobby is when I decided . . . who needs it?"