

The Goldwater Postmortem

IN HIS POST-MORTEM press conference yesterday, Barry Goldwater talked as though he still felt in his heart he'd been right and that the liberal and moderate Republicans were largely responsible for the GOP losses in the election.

This is a myth which had better be killed in the bud. There should be no lingering doubt, one correspondent writes from Scottsdale, that "the chief architect of Barry Goldwater's devastating defeat was none other than Goldwater himself."

Goldwater started himself and the party down the road to disaster by shocking and appalling the American people at the Cow Palace convention last July. Anyone who remembers the Republican convention at all accurately will recall the cold contempt for the other man's point of view, the frightening disdain for any exchange of opinion, the implacable hostility toward any and all "liberals," the insulting rudeness of the Goldwaterites to such men as Governors Rockefeller and Romney and Senators Scott and Javits.

SO WHEN GOLDWATER SAYS, as he did yesterday in Phoenix, that the philosophy he represents is "a Republican philosophy that I believe the Republican party must cling to and strengthen in the years ahead," we would reply with all the earnestness at our command that the American people clearly are not for it and will never have it.

This disaffection of the great American majority with Goldwaterism has been going on for a long time. Throughout the summer and fall the polls have been overwhelmingly and almost unwaveringly against him. No use for him to pretend that the image of a "trigger-happy" Goldwater was what cost him the election; the people around Goldwater had lost the election before the campaign began.

The first lesson of the Republican post mortem is, therefore, that the party must be rescued from the extremists and redirected toward the mainstream of American thinking. When that has been accomplished by liberal and moderate and conservative Republicans of true good will, those who switched to Johnson on Tuesday will start coming back and the job of rebuilding the party on the basis of rational political principles can begin.