

Editorials

Strange Wooing Sounds From GOP

TO CITIZENS WITH LONG political memories, it seemed strange to hear speakers at the Miami Beach convention's opening night salute Harry Truman, Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey and other Democrats on whom the GOP has in the past poured abuse and denunciation.

Something must be happening in American political alignments and responses if the Republican strategists believe that they can safely praise the other side's retired champions without risk of bringing down the lightning on themselves.

The spectacle is certainly novel at a national party convention. Connoisseurs of American political rhetoric are ill-accustomed to seeing any sign of magnanimous feeling toward the opposition party. Time was when the Democrats were the party of "rum, Romanism and Rebellion." It wasn't necessary then to bug a headquarters to know where Republicans stood on the subject of Democrats.

MONDAY NIGHT'S APPEAL to anti-McGovern sentiments was pre-arranged, as everything at the Republican convention seems to be. Yet there appeared to be a confident hope among the contented Republicans that by sympathizing with Democrats over having had foisted on them a radical like George McGovern, a man who they warned is unfit to lead the country, a harvest of discontented votes can be reaped.

That remains to be seen, of course, but there is some speculation going around that Republicans hope to pick up one out of three Democratic votes, which would certainly be an astonishing defection.

SO WHEN SENATOR HUGH SCOTT, the amiable and decent Senate minority leader, asked the convention for a momentary tribute to Mr. Johnson and Mr. Truman in recognition of their service to the Nation, and the stage management broke out large pictures of the two living ex-Presidents, the sense that history had turned a corner was inescapable. It became even more inescapable when Senator Robert Dole, the chairman of the Republican National Committee and one of the most caustic critics of what he calls the "Democrat" party, had words of praise for the ex-Presidents. What was thought of all this back in Independence and back at the Johnson ranch isn't recorded.