

INSIDE REPORT:

(From the New York Herald Tribune)

Republican leaders of both the Goldwater and the non-Goldwater variety are getting an autumnal chill from the startling results of post-convention voter registration.

The message is all too clear: voters are registering Democratic in larger ratios than two and four years ago. The switch in party preference is greater than any time since the Democrats supplanted the Republicans in the New Deal as the majority party. In short, the meager Republican voting base is being whittled down even finer.

This might dash the pleasant hopes of liberal Republicans secretly counting on a landslide defeat of Sen. Barry Goldwater to restore them to party power. Now, the registration statistics point to possible disaster for Goldwater and non-Goldwater Republicans alike.

Consider, for example, a high-income neighborhood in Montgomery County, Maryland, on the outskirts of Washington. Known as the Sumner area, this rather chic suburb, comprising the 24th Precinct of the Seventh Election District, has been the number one stronghold of Republicanism in all Montgomery County.

In 1960, registration in Sumner was 56.5 per cent Republican. It was also 56.5 per cent in 1962. Before the most recent registration, this summer, it was 52.5 per cent. In the registration period just closed, however, the Republican percentage has dropped to a scarcely credible 28.9 per cent.

The registration list on Sept. 1 showed 141 Democrats, 70 Republicans and 31 "declines"—that is voters who call themselves neither Democratic nor Republican.

The significant fact in this precipitous change is not any absolute increase in the total registration (there has been practically no change) but the shift from Republican to Democratic.

Consider next what is happening in Pittsburgh, Pa. During a five-day registration period recently, 88 per cent of all new voters registered as Democrats.

By itself, this would mean little in a Democratic city. But four years ago, during a similar five-day registration period in the same area, only 78 per cent of

the new registrants were Democrats.

In total bulk, registration has shown no great increase over 1960. In Los Angeles, the total number of registered Democrats is some 70,000 less than four years ago. And in Pennsylvania, the total number of new 1964 registrants is 12 per cent less than at this time in 1960.

But the ratio of Democratic registrants to Republican registrants is higher than four years ago. In neither state has the drive reached its peak.

Still another straw in the wind is what is happening in New Jersey. In Newark and Camden (both of which have large Negro populations) the volume of new Negro

registrants is twice what it was in 1960. In Camden alone, Negro registration is already some 25,000 over the level of four years ago.

"You can bet," gloats one Democratic strategist, "that every new Negro registrant means one more vote for us."

The real significance of new Democratic registrants who used to register Republican hinges on the matter of durability. Breaking a traditional Republican voting habit by voting Democratic (but maintaining Republican registration) is one thing. Switching registration itself is far more significant.

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