

Perspective

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Wanted—Two Chairmen

by RAYMOND MOLEY

Both major parties are faced with the job of selecting a new chairman. The Republican National Committee meets on Dec. 7 to choose a successor to Joseph Martin Jr., who has served since 1940. No date has as yet been set for a Democratic Committee meeting, but those who follow politics closely look for its announcement within a month or so, when Edward J. Flynn, the present Democratic chairman, is expected to resign.

With the restoration of a close balance in party strength, the choice of a new chairman in each case is not unimportant. In fact, it may provide some clue to the political events of 1944.

In the Democratic party the President will dictate the decision. His problem will be only to make a selection from the rather scanty list of possibilities. But these facts are, of themselves, meaningful symptoms of the party organization's state of health.

It can hardly be said that there are any active candidates for the chairman's job in the Democratic party. Postmaster General Frank Walker might be drafted by the President, but he would accept only with the greatest reluctance. Leo Crowley, Alien Property Custodian, is most frequently mentioned. Joseph E. Davies, former Ambassador to Moscow, and John W. McCormack, majority leader of the House, are possibilities. None stirs much enthusiasm. It will be many a day before another Farley is found. The bloom is simply off the job. Not much patronage remains to be given out, and the New Deal inner circle provides what political counsel the President needs.

The fight for the chairmanship in the Republican party, on the other hand, suggests the vigor of the party's hopes. So does the fact that so many prospective Presidential candidacies are in evidence. The GOP is feeling the oats of the November victory. Party insiders say the new chairman must be experienced in politics and must come from the Midwest or West. Circumstances may alter these specifications, but now they seem pretty important.

Most frequently mentioned is Werner W. Schroeder, national committeeman

of Illinois, who, since 1940, has presided over a sort of renaissance of Republicanism in his state. He is pretty violently opposed by Willkie friends, however, because they say he is too close to the McCormick-Brooks people. This opposition may turn the choice elsewhere.

There is a strong call for Alf M. Landon, who is reluctant to serve. Other possibilities are national committeemen Harrison E. Spangler of Iowa, Ralph H. Calk of Oregon and Sinclair Weeks of Massachusetts. Likewise John Hollister of Ohio, former congressman and law partner of Senator Taft. The chances that the committee will go completely outside the party organization to select some well-known businessman are exceedingly slim.

After an insistent demand by Mr. Willkie a statement on foreign affairs was adopted at the April meeting of the Republican National Committee. This time there is little demand for statements of party policy. That is fortunate because the making of any resolution on national policy by the national committee is an impropriety. It has no legal power to bind the party. The convention does that. The committee's job is to keep the national party alive between Presidential campaigns, to prepare for the convention and the campaign, to raise money, to conduct research on national affairs and to maintain contact with state and local organizations.

Mr. Willkie's influence in the forthcoming meeting will be of some importance. But it will not be decisive. The 1940 candidate will, it is said, control not over a quarter of the 106 members. The rift between him and the party organization is now pretty deep.

But arguments among Republicans, while troublesome, are not signs of weakness. In 1920 the Republican party emerged from years of internal conflict to win the election. In 1932, though the pre-convention fight of the Democrats was bitter, they carried through triumphantly. The real test of the Republican party will be the performance of its 22 governors, its 209 members of the House and its 38 senators, not what its members say about each other.



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