

# Republicans beating selves

WASHINGTON — Ronald Reagan and his backers are employing a dangerous and divisive tactic in the closing phase of the battle for the Republican presidential nomination. They are playing sectional politics in a party that needs no further splintering.



David S. Broder

At last weekend's Iowa Republican convention, the Reagan forces distributed a flyer claiming "Reagan has the strength where it's needed in November. (President) Ford has carried only the northeast states, the states least likely to go Republican in the November general election. Reagan has carried the South and the West, which we must have to beat Jimmy Carter, and which are most likely to carry the GOP to victory in November."

One wonders what their reaction would be to the news that Reagan's forces are writing off their states as "the least likely to go Republican" in November.

Second, one must wonder what the Republican nomination would be worth if the premise of Reagan's propaganda should be true.

He appears to be writing off seven of the big ten states — New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Florida, New Jersey and Massachusetts. The biggest states that would leave in the Republican column are California, Texas, and either Indiana or North Carolina.

Translated into electoral votes, that would put Carter ahead 185 to 84, and leave the Republican with an almost impossible burden to overcome.

Reagan does have one valid point to make in talking about the geography of the presidential race. He clearly has demonstrated a strong regional base in the West — the only area of the country where Carter failed to win a single presidential primary.

Except for Oregon, where he finished a close second to the President, Reagan has won every primary and state convention held in the

West. His sweep is likely to be completed in New Mexico, Colorado and Utah. At this point, he appears to be a better bet to carry his home state of California against Carter than Mr. Ford would be of beating Carter in Michigan.

But to go beyond that and suggest that Reagan holds the key to November victory by his strength in the South is a substantial distortion. Mr. Ford might have a hard time holding much in the South against Carter. But so would Reagan.

The new Gallup figures show the Georgian leading Mr. Ford by the landslide proportion of 61 to 32 per cent in the South, with 7 per cent undecided. But the same poll puts Carter ahead of Reagan in the South by an even wider margin, 65 to 30 per cent, with 5 per cent undecided.

With that kind of showing, there is no reason for Reagan to play divisive sectional politics inside the GOP. His propaganda writing off seven of the ten major states to the Democrats is a disservice to his party and himself.

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# Belts save lives

Will you be among the 25 per cent of U.S. drivers who will have a traffic accident this year?

"It has been estimated that one out of every four drivers in the U.S. will have a traffic accident in 1976," says Dr. Gary Nelson, an agricultural safety engineer with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service. "Furthermore, highway accidents are the leading cause of death for Americans under age 25."

However, drivers can do some things to decrease their chances of being injured in a traffic accident.

"First and foremost, wear a seat belt," advises Nelson. "Experts estimate that 10,000 to 15,000 lives a year would be saved if everyone used seat belts while driving. Drivers who don't wear seat belts are greatly increasing the odds that they will be seriously injured or killed in a severe car accident by being thrown against the dashboard or windshield or out of the car," Nelson said.

Some people seem to feel that a seat belt will trap them if their car catches on fire or becomes submerged in water, he said. However, there's more chance that a person not wearing a seat belt will be knocked unconscious in an accident and will thus be unable to escape at all. Also, seat belt releases have a reputation for being reliable and easy to use, Nelson said.

"Good vehicle maintenance is another thing drivers can do to prevent accidents," said the Texas A&M University System engineer.

"Don't put off making repairs. Make sure all vehicle parts are in good working condition and have your car tuned-up at least once a year."

The engineer also puts the blame of some traffic accidents on errors in the design of vehicles and highway systems.

"More standardized equipment, such as the location of various switches, and safer design of highways would cut down on traffic accidents," he said.

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When they start that far behind, the only way either man can hope to overcome Carter is by convincing voters across the country, in the course of the general election campaign, that Carter is less qualified to be President than they now suppose. Any successful Republican campaign will have to be a national campaign—aimed straight at Jimmy Carter.

Instead, Reagan appears to be arguing, for short-term gain, that Republicans can win with some sort of warmed-over version of the Goldwater-Nixon "Southern strategy." Not only is this implausible, it is self-destructive.

If the Ford campaign committee were smart, it would take Reagan's Iowa propaganda sheet and see that it get into the hands of every Republican delegate in Maine, New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Florida and Kentucky. These all happen to be states where Reagan is trying to break off "soft" Ford delegates or woo the uncommitted delegates to his column.

## SIGHT Quiz

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