

R. Hemenway, 88; Aided Liberal Causes

By DOUGLAS MARTIN

Russell D. Hemenway, who rose from reform politics in New York City to help orchestrate national strategies to advance liberal candidates and ideas, died on Jan. 30 at his home in Rhinebeck, N.Y. He was 88.

His family announced the death.

From 1965 until his death, Mr. Hemenway was national director of the National Committee for an Effective Congress, which was founded in 1948 by Eleanor Roosevelt and others to support left-leaning candidates for Congress and the Democratic Party. By 1976, its power had grown to the extent that the newspaper *The National Observer* called it "perhaps the most powerful political force in this country."

As campaign laws were tightened in the 1970s to limit financial contributions of groups and individuals, the committee maintained its influence by developing advanced systems for sorting electoral data and pinpointing areas where it might devote its efforts.

Republicans took notice. "Some of the techniques the G.O.P. must try are the sophisticated and concentrated personal campaigning of organization such as the National Committee for an Effective Congress," Senator Bob Dole of Kansas was quoted as saying in 1978 in an article by the conservative Heritage Foundation.

The organization was a reliable bearer of the progressive, usually Democratic, torch. It fought McCarthyism, backed civil rights legislation, criticized American involvement in Vietnam, called for President Richard M. Nixon's impeachment, battled tax breaks for oil companies and pushed arms control agreements.

But Mr. Hemenway saw a threat to the American political system that transcended any specific issue. "The average citizen," he told *The New York Post* in 1971, "has become cynical to the point where he doesn't see any difference between the incumbent and the challenger — they're both crooks in his eyes."

His answer was legislation to limit campaign contributions and expenditures, and when it was passed in Congress, many credited the committee with pushing it through. Future measures



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Russell Hemenway, flanked by Allard K. Lowenstein and Bella Abzug in 1978, when they were candidates for a House seat.

would strengthen parts of the law, while court decisions weakened other parts.

Russell Douglas Hemenway was born on March 25, 1925, in Leominster, Mass. After World War II began, he was drafted into the Navy during his freshman year at Dartmouth and served on a destroyer in the Pacific. He returned to Dartmouth to graduate with a degree in government, after which he studied at the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris.

He then served in the Foreign Service in France and Greece. While working in Paris he met Adlai E. Stevenson, who became

A reformist who developed systems to sort electoral data.

the Democratic Party's presidential candidate in 1952 and 1956. Mr. Stevenson urged him to return to the United States and become involved in politics.

He took the advice. Moving to New York City, Mr. Hemenway became active in Democratic politics while working as an investment broker and a director of the city office of the state Commerce Department. He rose to president of the Lexington Democratic Club, which opposed the city's dominant Democratic or-

ganization, and was later elected executive director of the New York Committee for Democratic Voters, another reform group. He went to Washington to be director of the National Committee for an Effective Congress in 1966.

Mr. Hemenway was involved in many campaigns, including Mr. Stevenson's unsuccessful effort to win a third Democratic presidential nomination in 1960, when the party chose Senator John F. Kennedy. In 1968 he was an early backer of Senator Eugene J. McCarthy's unsuccessful bid for the Democratic presidential nomination, which went to Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey.

In his 2003 book, "McCarthy for President: The Candidacy That Toppled a President, Pulled a New Generation Into Politics, and Moved the Country Toward Peace," Arthur Herzog III called Mr. Hemenway "a handsome man who could charm, or bully, a campaign contribution from Scrooge." Mr. Herzog reported that Mr. Hemenway once ran into a drunken man in a hotel corridor and extracted a \$5,000 campaign pledge.

Mr. Hemenway, who also had a home in Manhattan, married Catherine Casey in 1951. She died in 1999. He is survived by their daughter, Anne Hemenway; his son from another relationship, Brent Hemenway; his sister, Joyce H. Brown; and two grandsons.