

## OBITUARIES

RUSSELL D. HEMENWAY, 88

## Led liberal political-reform group

BY ADAM BERNSTEIN

Russell D. Hemenway, who spent more than four decades at the helm of the National Committee for an Effective Congress, a political organization that raised money and provided campaign advice for liberals in both major parties, died Jan. 30 at his home in Rhinebeck, N.Y. He was 88.

His daughter, Anne Hemenway, confirmed the death but did not provide the cause.

Mr. Hemenway, a backstage strategist in the Rolodex of many journalists, was a stalwart of the Democratic reform movement in New York City before joining the NCEC in 1966. He held the title of national director until his death.

Along with the left-leaning Americans for Democratic Action, the NCEC was a force in progressive politics for much of the Cold War era. Former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt formed the committee in 1948, and some of its formative supporters included historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Sr., the poet Archibald MacLeish and the political scientist Hans Morgenthau.

Over the decades, the NCEC participated in efforts to censure Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy (R-Wis.) for his destructive anti-communist crusade and lent support to candidates who opposed the Vietnam War and supported civil rights and arms control.

Under Mr. Hemenway, the NCEC was a critical backer of the 1971 Federal Election Campaign Act, which imposed new disclosure requirements in an effort to regulate federal campaign financing. At the time, he called the measure a "crucial first step toward cleansing politics of secrecy, duplicity and special interest influence."

More rigorous regulations would follow after the Watergate scandal, but the 1971 law ended some of the more blatant financial abuses in national politics, said David Cohen, a former president of the government-watchdog group Common Cause.

Mr. Hemenway, who appeared on President Richard M. Nixon's "enemies list," described the



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Russell D. Hemenway, left, confers with former senator Frank Church (D-Idaho) and Rep. Berkley Bedell (D-Iowa).

NCEC as nonpartisan and noted that it gave money and support to moderate and liberal Republicans such as Sen. Charles McC. Mathias Jr. of Maryland and Rep. Claudine Schneider of Rhode Island. Their ranks dwindled after the Reagan landslide in 1980.

"All I know is that the young people you see elected today tend to be more and more extreme in their views," he told *The Washington Post* in 1983. "The moderate and liberal wing of the Republican Party is becoming harder to find. In that one sense, we have failed. The liberal wing of the Republican Party is moribund."

The NCEC, which has offices in Washington and New York, waned in influence in recent decades but remained involved in election analysis and political consulting.

Russell Douglas Hemenway was born March 24, 1925, in Leominster, Mass. He served in the Navy during World War II aboard the heavy cruiser USS Pittsburgh, which in June 1945 lost its bow during a typhoon in the Pacific but made it through the storm without loss of life.

After graduating from Dartmouth College in 1949, he studied at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, or Sciences Po. From 1951 to 1953, he was a Foreign Service staff officer in Athens evaluating the use of postwar economic recovery aid to Greece.

His wife, Catherine Casey,

whom he married in 1951, died in 1999. Survivors include a daughter from his marriage, Anne Hemenway of Manhattan; a son from a relationship, Brent Hemenway of Ann Arbor, Mich.; a sister; and two grandsons.

Mr. Hemenway settled in New York by the mid-1950s and was a business and financial consultant to investment and development companies. He also became a leading figure in a reform movement within the Democratic Party that rebelled against entrenched political machines. He led a reform political club on Manhattan's East Side that found candidates to oust Tammany Hall politicians.

Mr. Hemenway, who became a fixture in the Democratic establishment, chaperoned Eleanor Roosevelt in 1960 to the party's national convention in Los Angeles. He also attended the 1963 civil rights march on Washington and was at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles when presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated there in 1968.

Mr. Hemenway was board chairman of the Fund for Constitutional Government, an anti-corruption group started by General Motors heir and philanthropist Stewart R. Mott. In addition, he was board chairman of the National Security Archive, an independent research center at George Washington University.

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