

DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES ON DEFEAT In a recent article by George McGovern, he speaks of the trauma of being defeated for the presidency in every state in the Union but one, including a defeat in his own home state. He writes on the theme of not giving up. He tells about that fateful night:

On election night 1972 in Sioux Falls, S.D., I went to bed exhausted at about 6 p.m., thinking that I could sleep for several hours before the results were known. I recalled that Harry Truman, with public opinion polls indicating his defeat, had gone to bed election night 1948 and had been awakened after midnight to be told that the tide might be turning his way. This could happen again, I thought, or perhaps I dreamed as much. But as I fell into a heavy sleep -- while voters in South Dakota were still going to the polls -- Jeff Smith, my young assistant, awakened me gently and said: "Senator, it's all over. They've beaten us everywhere except Massachusetts and the District of Columbia."

Those words almost stopped my heart. How could this be possible? What about all those wildly applauding throngs who had been cheering me from coast to coast for

months? What about all those farm states I had fought for in the Congress for the last 16 years? And those millions of young people who cheered me as I raised the banner of peace and justice? There was no way I could lose 49 states.

Surely South Dakotans would want their native son in the White House? Never for one minute during the long national campaign, which began and ended in South Dakota, did it occur to me that I might lose my own beloved home state. This was easily the most painful reality for my wife, Eleanor, to accept.

I managed to get through election night with some measure of grace and even some attempts at humor. Even I had to laugh after consoling Jeff Smith with the assurance that we would soon recover from the defeat, when he replied, "Well, that's easy for you to say, but what about the rest of us?"