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CONNECTICUT'S ELLA GRASSO (LEFT) & ARKANSAS' DALE BUMPERS CAMPAIGNING

## THE CAMPAIGN

# Landslide in the Making

When the two old friends squeeze in a round of golf these days, as they used to do when they were together in the House, Congressman Thomas P. ("Tip") O'Neill, leader of the Democratic majority, occasionally brings up a subject that can do little to help the game, or the morale, of President Gerald Ford. The Democrats, O'Neill is telling Ford, are going to win big, very big, in November.

All the evidence tends to support him. The main issue is double-digit inflation. Says one Midwestern G.O.P. leader: "There is no one alive who knows the answer to our economic problems, but the blame falls on Republican shoulders because we're in."

While Watergate has faded as an issue, the scandal is still hurting the G.O.P. badly. A score or more of attractive Republicans decided long ago to sit out this election. One notable example: Illinois' able Congressman John B. Anderson, 52, who last spring abandoned any thought of challenging Democratic Senator Adlai E. Stevenson III. In addition, Watergate tied a square knot in the purse strings of big G.O.P. donors. The Ohio party is nearly broke, and contributions to the Illinois party are off by 90%. Says Michigan's G.O.P. Chairman William McLaughlin: "A lot of people believe that you're a crook if you give and a crook if you take."

**Veto-Proof.** The opinion polls offer the G.O.P. no comfort. A Roper survey delivered last month revealed that only 21% of U.S. voters considered themselves Republicans (v. 48% Democrats and 26% independents). The Gallup poll, meanwhile, shows that the percentage of Americans who consider themselves Republicans has dropped from 28% in 1972 to 23%. Another Gallup survey out this week discloses that voters plan to back Democratic congres-

sional candidates over Republicans by a margin of 54% to 35%.

If these feelings are transformed into votes on Nov. 5, the Democrats estimate that they could win as many as 50 new seats in the House, changing the current Democratic margin of 248-187 to something approaching 300-135. This would give the Democrats their largest majority in the House since the Depression year of 1936, when they pulled 56.1% of the vote and took 333 seats.

In the Senate, only 14 of the 42 Republican seats are up for election, and the Democrats have serious hopes of winning only three or four of these. But since the Democrats may well hold all 20 of their seats that are being contested, they could end up with a margin of around 62-38 in the Senate (it is now 58-42). There is even an outside chance that the election could produce a "veto-proof Congress," with the Democrats controlling two-thirds of both the House and the Senate.

In the 35 gubernatorial contests, the Democrats could add half a dozen statehouses to their 32. "Even if we don't make a net gain," says Robert J. Keefe, political director of the Democratic National Committee, "the worst we might do is trade 'em Alaska and Oklahoma for California and New York. Hell, I'll make that trade any day!"

In the past few months, the Republicans' chances have resembled an erratic fever chart. After Richard Nixon's resignation, the party hoped to lose no more than 20 House seats. Then came the pardon. Says a G.O.P. Congressman from New Jersey: "I think Republicans in each congressional district picked up 20,000 votes when Nixon resigned, and lost 10,000 when Ford pardoned him."

In an effort to win back some votes, the President not only will be out barnstorming in the next month, but has also



LOS ANGELES TIMES

CALIFORNIA'S FLOURNOY TALKING TACTICS  
Bad news on the golf course.

offered to write a letter of endorsement for every G.O.P. Senator and Congressman up for election. Invited to suggest what should go into his letter, one bitter Republican snapped: "That he's sorry he pardoned Nixon, that he just doesn't know how he could have made that blunder."

**Mostly Ashes.** The Republicans are holding their own only in the South, which never did sour on Nixon. Perhaps the freshest political face in the region belongs to Tennessee's Lamar Alexander, 34. Energetic and coolly intelligent, Alexander is given a good chance of becoming Governor by defeating three-term Democratic Congressman Ray Blanton. But the Democrats are not without promising candidates of their own—most notably Arkansas' Governor Dale Bumpers, 49, who is expected to win a Senate seat handily after having beaten the redoubtable Senator William Fulbright in the primary.

Elsewhere round the country, it is



mostly ashes for the G.O.P. In the Northeastern and mid-Atlantic states, the Democrats hope to pick up as many as 16 congressional seats. Connecticut's Democratic Congresswoman Ella Grasso, 55, is favored to become the first woman in the nation's history to be elected Governor on her own by defeating Republican Robert Steele, himself an attractive young Congressman.

The Democrats are hopeful that their biggest victory in the region will come in New York's gubernatorial contest. Congressman Hugh Carey, 55, an old-fashioned liberal given mod appeal by some adroit television ads, is running far ahead of Malcolm Wilson, 60, the earnest but lackluster incumbent who moved up from Lieutenant Governor when Nelson Rockefeller resigned last December. A poll published last month by *Newsday*, a Long Island newspaper, showed Carey leading Wilson by the surprising margin of 52% to 27%. Carey's strong showing has improved the once dismal prospects of his ticketmate: former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, an ultra-liberal Texas transplant who is challenging liberal G.O.P. Senator Jacob Javits, 70, long (perhaps too long) New York's biggest vote-getter.

In the Midwest, traditional stronghold of the G.O.P., the Republicans could lose up to 22 of their 69 congressional seats—as many as six in the bastions of Nebraska and Iowa. In the 13 Western states, the Democrats should pick up at least five and perhaps as many as eleven congressional seats. The most interesting Senate fight is in Colorado, where Democrat Gary Hart, 36, George McGovern's presidential campaign manager in 1972, is trying to link conservative G.O.P. Senator Peter Dominick, 59, to some of the tainted milk money collected for President Nixon's re-election.

**Voter Apathy.** The biggest prize on the West Coast is the Governor's mansion in Sacramento, Calif. The Democrats hope to capture it with a candidate whose family used to live there: Edmund G. ("Jerry") Brown, 36, the son of ex-Governor (1959-66) Edmund G. ("Pat") Brown. Now California's secretary of state, Brown has frequently put Houston Flournoy, 45, the state's able controller, on the defensive.

As they look to November, professionals in both parties, but especially the Republicans, are worried that voter apathy will cut into their totals in unpredictable ways. There is a sense of disillusionment over Watergate and helplessness over inflation. During a radio talk show in Maine, someone called in recently to ask: "Why do we need a Governor at all? What can any of these men do for us?" Other callers immediately seized upon the same idea. With Watergate in the near past and the prospect of inflation stretching into the distant future, more than a few politicians are having trouble convincing voters that anybody can make a difference.



THE FORDS VIEWING "BEST WISHES" PETITION FROM 100 U.S. SENATORS

## THE WHITE HOUSE

# Ford on the Offensive

Amid growing criticism that he was drifting and avoiding hard decisions, President Ford took the offensive on several political fronts last week.

He made extensive, energetic preparations for his economic message to the nation this week (see cover stories, THE ECONOMY). He beat back an attempt by the Senate to undercut his foreign policy. He made a startling offer to go before Congress to explain why he had pardoned Richard Nixon. He met with 22 of the nation's mayors and pledged to sign an \$11.8 billion mass-transit bill. He reorganized his fumbling White House staff. Though he was obviously distracted by his wife's bout with cancer and visited her every day at the hospital, he also dined with congressional friends, threw a party for retiring members of Congress and was host at a white-tie-and-medals reception for the Washington diplomatic corps. It was a brisk display of a Chief Executive in action and, despite all his troubles, enjoying it.

The Senate revolt was directed not so much against Ford as against his predecessor and at what many regard as the clandestine tactics of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Still angered by the disclosure of the CIA's intervention in Chilean politics, Senators saw a chance to strike back when a resolution authorizing a temporary continuation of foreign aid came to the floor last week. A majority voted an amendment banning military aid to Chile. Then, by a much larger margin, the Senate voted to cut off military assistance to Turkey on the ground that U.S. weaponry had been used in the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. Finally, the Senate voted to stop shipments of fertilizer to South Viet Nam.

Ford was especially alarmed that the U.S. would lose leverage in the Cyprus crisis if aid to Turkey was halted. He sent staffers to Capitol Hill where they persuaded House-Senate conferees to eliminate the objectionable amendments from the resolution. Now the Senate must decide whether to accept the revised measure.

Confronted with a list of questions from Congress about the Nixon pardon, Ford could have supplied written replies or none at all. Instead, in the interest of an open presidency and in the hope of putting the issue to rest, he volunteered to testify before a subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee this week.\* The probe will be televised. Said the delighted Democratic subcommittee chairman, William Hungate: "It is consistent with the frankness and openness he displayed as a Congressman."

**Unique Occasion.** Even some critics of the "imperial presidency" worry that Ford may be weakening his office by testifying before Congress. But he feels that he is giving nothing away since he is going voluntarily. As Ford explains it, since a presidential pardon of a former President is such a unique occasion, it deserves a unique explanation.

Ford moved to solve his staff problems by instructing all of his aides, who tend to take up too much of his time on less than crucial matters, to report to Donald Rumsfeld, 42, his newly named "coordinator of White House operations." For someone of Ford's democrat-

\*Though the record is somewhat murky, Ford will apparently be the first President to testify on a formal basis before a congressional committee. Abraham Lincoln made a few trips to Capitol Hill to confer informally about his war policies.