

Aides Say Ford Has Foiled Challenge by G.O.P. Right

SEP 30 1975

NYTimes

By PHILIP SHABECOFF

SEP 30 1975

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 29 — White House aides are saying privately that President Ford has successfully blunted a challenge by the right wing of the Republican Party to his nomination in 1976 and predict that he will soon adopt a slightly more moderate stance to broaden his electoral appeal.

The aides concede that former Gov. Ronald Reagan of California could still cause serious problems for Mr. Ford in primary elections if he decides to contest the nomination, particularly in New Hampshire and Florida.

But they say that Republican conservatives will not rally solidly around Mr. Reagan as they did with Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona in 1964. President Ford, his aides say, commands at least as much support among the conservatives as Mr. Reagan, and his strength is growing.

This White House assessment is shared by a number of Republicans on Capitol Hill, including some, such as Senator Bill Brock of Tennessee, who are usually identified as conservatives.

"The reason Rockefeller is an issue is because President Ford is not an issue," Senator Brock said in an interview. "We have to have something to talk about before the convention."

Senator Brock said that the situation within the Republican party was clearly different from what it was in 1964 when conservatives turned savagely against Mr. Rockefeller, the New York Governor, and gave their overwhelming support to Senator Goldwater.

"Today it is not a contest for the whole soul of the party but only a contest for political power," Mr. Brock said.

He said that he did not think there would be much of a contest for the Presidential nomination.

One Presidential aide familiar with political planning in the White House said that President Ford had moved somewhat to the right in both his policy decisions and public rhetoric a few months after taking office in August, 1974.

To a degree, the aide ex-

Continued on Page 21, Column 1

Continued From Page 1, Col. 6

plained, this move reflected the President's basically conservative instincts. But it also reflected the fact that in recent years "the Republican party has grown smaller and increasingly conservative," he said.

In the view of this aide—and it is a view shared by other Republicans, including members of the Liberal Ripon Society as well as Conservatives—Mr. Ford has persuaded much of the right wing of his party that his conservative credentials are acceptable.

Senator Goldwater is the elder statesman of party conservatives, but the constituency that gave him the nomination in 1964 is not transferrable to Mr. Reagan or any other right-wing figure, these observers say.

Mr. Reagan does have an intensely loyal following, these party experts say. It includes many of Senator Goldwater's old followers in the "Sun Belt" of Southern California, Texas and the Southwest. Mr. Reagan is said to be especially strong among former Dixiecrats in the South, Democrats now turned Republican. And he is supported by what is described as ideological "purists" of the party.

But these observers also say that it is the President, not Mr. Reagan, who commands the support of the party's traditional Middle-Western Main Street conservatives. Mr. Ford is seen as heir to Robert Taft and the laissez-faire Republican liberals of the 19th century.

Core of Goldwater Support

These conservatives joined the "Sun Belt" and Southern conservatives in 1964 to crush Nelson Rockefeller and the party's "Eastern liberal establishment" and nominate Goldwater.

When President Ford said in Los Angeles last week that he would not mind a contest for the nomination with Mr. Reagan and expressed confidence that he would win, he was reflecting an attitude expressed privately by White House aides for some weeks. The aides concede that Mr. Reagan is a polished performer with a devoted following on the Republican right.

"But Reagan is not the symbol of Republican conservatism in the way Goldwater was," one of the President's political advisers commented.

Mr. Ford is not ignoring the potential challenge by Mr. Reagan. Political considerations, despite White House disclaimers, are regarded as a chief reason the President made two trips to California this month, both of which nearly turned out to be tragedies.

Despite the assassination attempts, the President is planning to return to California next month for two Republican fund-raising affairs. Mr. Ford has also paid several visits recently to the South and Southwest.

"The President has helped himself by coming down, an official of the Oklahoma State Republican Committee told a reporter after a meeting between Mr. Ford and leading state Republicans. "Reagan is very popular among Republicans in Oklahoma, but I'll bet the delegation will go for Ford at the convention," the official said.

In public and private statements on these trips, Mr. Ford has taken pains to underline

his conservative credentials such issues as Federal spending, government bureaucracy, school busing, and states' rights, both as a Congressman and as President. And a number of party conservatives said when asked that they could see no major policy differences between Mr. Reagan and Mr. Ford.

Fiscal-Conservative Bloc

Some hard-line fiscal conservatives profess unhappiness with Mr. Ford's budget deficit of \$60-billion and his signing of legislation for public service employment. But even most conservatives would probably agree with the White House official who commented that "given the economic and political circumstances it is a

<p>miracle that the President is able to hold the deficit down to \$60-to \$70-billion."</p>	<p>aides indicate that this suggestion did not fall on unfertile ground. One adviser said that there was uncomfortable truth to the suggestion that it would be too late if the President waited until after the Republican convention next August to move into the middle ground where independent and Democratic votes could be won.</p>	<p>relieve the lot of the poor and underprivileged.</p>	<p>Republican faction off against another but Ford is a coalition-maker by temperament."</p>
<p>In fact it was the consistent conservatism of Mr. Ford's actions and policies as President that prompted a group of liberal and moderate Republican members of Congress known as the Wednesday Club to visit the President several weeks ago and urge him to change course.</p>	<p>Accordingly, a number of knowledgeable members of the White House staff expect the President to shift to a more moderate posture. The shift will not be a dramatic one, they caution. There will be no major efforts to reduce quickly the number of jobless workers, to control prices and wages or to</p>	<p>The aides do predict that the President will end his moratorium on new Federal programs and that the executive branch will come up with some modest new proposals next year.</p>	<p>Many Republicans, including conservatives, said that the party was badly in need of unity and could not afford a divisive struggle between President Ford and Mr. Reagan such as the Goldwater-Rockefeller contest that split the party in 1964.</p>
<p>According to Senator Jacob K. Javits of New York, the group argued that the President faced the political necessity of adopting a more moderate policy to gain support in states with large electoral votes.</p>	<p>Comments by the President's</p>	<p>But the shift is likely to be more one of rhetoric and posture than of substance on specific issues in the view of observers. "The president is a conservative ideologically, but he is a centrist politically," said a Ripon Society theoretician who asked not be quoted by name.</p>	<p>"None of us want to go through that again," Senator Brock said. "We are too small to be divided. The party has been terribly damaged in the past few years. We can't afford to chew each other up any more."</p>
<p>Comments by the President's</p>	<p>control prices and wages or to</p>	<p>"As a Midwestern Republican, Ford fits into the centrist role very comfortably," he added. "Nixon used to play one</p>	<p>any more."</p>