

G.O.P. Revives Policy Unit Independent of President

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 12 — The Republican party established today what it hoped would be a policy voice independent of President Nixon just as the White House said it was beginning to win the counter-offensive against its Watergate critics.

A revived Republican Coordinating Committee, dormant since the party's recovery from the Goldwater defeat of 1964, listened this morning to a 40-minute speech from the President, promising full cooperation and several specific items of evidence to the Watergate investigators.

In its first resolution, the party panel said it "welcomed" Mr. Nixon's pledges of "full disclosure." But some members of the coordinating committee said later that the President was still in grave political trouble, that pledges alone were not sufficient for his recovery, and that the party had to reassert its separate identity before the Congressional elections next year.

In a broad statement of purpose, the 28-member committee of party elders, Congressional leaders, Governors and other Republican officials assigned

itself the role of seeing the party through the crisis of confidence in Mr. Nixon. The group said it would try, among other things, to "develop positions" on national policy questions, meet the practical needs of local party workers, study election reforms and "actively involve itself in assessing and developing issues of major importance in future campaigns."

Seldom has the party of a President in power made such a sweeping assertion of its responsibility for leadership. And the origins of the coordinating committee, in the days after President Johnson's landslide victory when many Republicans worried about the party's survival, underlined the gloom in the party as President Nixon's popularity was reported again at about a third of the American electorate.

Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, said at a news briefing this morning that Mr. Nixon's continuing meetings with Republican leaders showed his determination "to meet the Watergate matter head on."

Mr. Ziegler described the

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further release of Mr. Nixon's recorded notes and other White House memorandums as "a substantial step, a constructive step" to help the courts and the Senate Watergate committee. "Anyone who is reviewing this matter, should now be convinced of Mr. Nixon's claim of innocence," the press secretary said.

Yet the Republican leaders who heard the President over breakfast at the White House came away saying that the promise of disclosure was only a beginning toward the restoration of confidence.

Senator William E. Brock 3d of Tennessee, an Administration ally and chairman of a committee that will help finance and promote Republican candidates for the Senate next year, was asked whether the President was now "out of the woods."

"By no means," Senator Brock replied. "But he's opened the door to cleaning things up."

Others on the coordinating committee were ven more cautious in their optimism.

Anderson's Comments

"I want to be very careful," said Representative John B. Anderson of Illinois, chairman of the House Republican Conference, when asked about the future of impeachment proceedings. "This is a time when mere words will not suffice. But this will give him an opportunity to make his case before we rush headlong into action."

Mr. Anderson said he had emphasized at the White House that "time is not on his side," and that the new offensive would be a "futile gesture" if it was only an exercise in public relations.

Governor Francis W. Sargent of Massachusetts, the only state that Mr. Nixon failed to carry in his 1972 landslide, was openly dubious about the sincerity or the success of President Nixon's initiative. "He's starting a campaign to attempt to reveal everything that's occurred," the Governor said. "It will be awfully difficult to restore the trust of the people of this country in his Administration. I gather there's going to be more and more release of information that's said to be authentic—and I hope it will be."

Governor Sargent, a cousin and neighbor of former Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson, who resigned last month rather than discharge Archibald Cox, the first Watergate prosecutor, added, "The vast majority of people in my state don't know whether to believe [Mr. Nixon] or not."

Asked if he believed the President's statement this morning, Mr. Sargent said, "I'm trying very hard to."

Gov. Robert Ray of Iowa said he thought Mr. Nixon's new candor might prove too little and too late. "This is something we hoped he might have done a long, long time ago," Mr. Ray said.

Representative Barber B. Conable Jr. of upstate New York, chairman of the House Republicans' Research Committee, told reporters after the White House breakfast, "It's embarrassing to see the President of the United States standing up and trying to defend himself to people who presumably are his supporters." Mr. Conable said he attributed the problem to Mr. Nixon's "insensitivity to the position he is in," but he added, "I think if the information comes out fully, the President will get the exoneration he's looking for."

Rhodes Is Satisfied

At the same time, Representative John J. Rhodes of Arizona, who said last week that the situation required a dramatic change of heart and a decision, in effect, to "turn the keys of the White House over" to Leon Jaworski, the new special Watergate prosecutor, said today he was satisfied by Mr. Nixon's new promise of disclosure.

Meanwhile, new opinion polls from Louis Harris and George Gallup added fresh details of the scope of President Nixon's political problems.

The President's popular support is down to 32 per cent—a 29 per cent drop from that of a year ago, according to the Harris Poll, which surveyed 1,007 households by telephone at the end of last month. That over-all 32 per cent rating is buoyed by 58 per cent for Mr. Nixon's performance in foreign affairs. On his handling of the Watergate tapes, the President has the support of only 17 per cent of the electorate, Mr. Harris reported.

Ford Visits New York

"I just don't think the President is going to be swayed by the mobs or the editorials," Representative Gerald R. Ford, the Vice President-designate, yesterday when he was asked during a news conference here about public pressures for President Nixon to resign.

The Michigan Republican, who is the House minority leader, spoke to business leaders at a closed meeting of the Calvin Bullock Forum at 1 Wall Street, then spent 20 minutes answering questions for a group of newsmen in a small anteroom there.

Mr. Ford said that the President's promise of "full disclosure" of all Watergate material would be "a giant first step" toward a renewal of public support for Mr. Nixon.

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