

G.O.P. Watergate Woes Typified in Pennsylvania

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Special to The New York Times

HARRISBURG, Pa., Dec. 10—If Pennsylvania is still a fair guide to the political balance in the country, the Republican party faces a national Watergate disaster in major elections next year.

In Washington, most Republican officials are still outwardly optimistic about the impact of the affair. But in Pennsylvania—one of 25 states that have both Senate and Governor's races next year—Republicans have watched the effects of Watergate at work in their mostly local races last month, and many of them are talking about devastation in 1974.

"Anybody on the Republican line this year was starting 10 to 15 points down," one strategist said of the cataclysm in

Philadelphia five weeks ago. If President Nixon stays in office, he added, "by the first of next year it could be 20 points."

In Johnstown, Pa., the contest to succeed the late Representative John P. Saylor, a 13-term Republican, is considered an uphill fight for any of several Republican candidates. "If we didn't have all these troubles coming out of Washington we'd have no trouble winning," said Andrew Gleason, the local Republican leader.

Senator Richard S. Schweiker an independent liberal Republican assured of labor union support, was rated a sure thing

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six months ago for re-election next fall. Today, says a friendly Philadelphia leader, "an attractive conservative could knock Schweiker off in a Republican primary."

Against a charismatic Democrat such as Mayor Peter Flaherty of Pittsburgh, another said, Senator Schweiker would be in "extremely deep trouble."

"He'd be in trouble against any Democrat who's articulate and has some track record," this leader said. "And the sad part of it is Schweiker's done an extremely fine job."

Most important to the organization Republicans, what only recently seemed a soft touch—to defeat Gov. Milton J. Shapp, a Democrat who wrote the state's first income tax law, and to recapture the vast patronage of the Pennsylvania Governor's office—is commonly described these days as an almost impossible dream.

Former Gov. William W. Scranton and Representative H. J. Heinz 3d, the only men that party officials believe could rise above the Watergate tide, have both refused to run.

Pennsylvania qualifies, on many counts, as a reasonable example of state-level races around the country next year. The third most populous state in the union after California and New York, it is historically a swing state, which voted narrowly against Richard Nixon for President in 1960 and 1968 but gave him a 60 per cent majority last year.

Pennsylvania has a Democratic Governor and two Republican Senators. Until Mr. Saylor's death its delegation in the House of Representatives was divided between 13 Democrats and 12 Republicans. Its state legislature has a Republican House and a Democratic Senate. A state of intense partisan competition, Pennsylvania can go either way but seldom swings wide in either direction, yet most of the signs today point to a huge Democratic tide in 1974.

to his courthouse candidates last month, was asked what could be done to break or counter the "Nixon connection" with Republican candidates in state and local races. "Nothing," he replied.

"Unfortunately perhaps," says one of Pennsylvania's most respected Republicans, who remains adamantly uninvolved—and anonymous—in the party's crisis, "there is no process in American politics by which a party can overthrow its President in the White House. There is no mechanism for revolution within the Republican party today."

Accordingly, Republican pressure on President Nixon to resign—much speculated about in Washington—is hard to find here. Republican politicians in Pennsylvania assume they will take the Watergate consequences willy-nilly. They no longer presume to advise a White House that stopped listening, party people feel, long ago. They feel damaged, and also adrift.

Low Spirits and Turnout

The primary Watergate symptom that Republicans watched this year and expect to recur next year is low spirits and low turnout among the independent-minded middle-class voters that Republican victories depend upon.

There were numerous cases of the disease in last month's voting—in the township elections in the rich Republican suburbs of Philadelphia, for example, where Democratic candidates did unprecedently well, and in a statewide judicial race that the democrats won handily. There were exceptions, too, as in Republican mayoral victories in the cities of York and Lancaster.

But the striking illustration of the basic Republican problem and its effects was the District Attorney's race in Philadelphia. "We held an election and nobody showed up," said Billy Meehan, the Republican city leader, of the 42 per cent turnout that upset all his plans.

Mr. Specter, running for his third term as District Attorney, was supposed to win re-election by 100,000 votes and reelect a slate of Republican judges on his coattails. But the brilliant, abrasive Mr. Specter had made enemies, it turned out, in the District Attorney's office and also in managing President Nixon's re-election campaign in Pennsylvania.

The support of Mayor Frank Rizzo apparently hurt Mr. Specter more than it helped. And most important, Republican and independent voters—soft-core supporters of Mr. Specter, unnerved by months of Watergate news—stayed home in record numbers.

Emmett Fitzpatrick, the Democrat who defeated Mr. Specter, won substantially few-

Other Money Problems

Watergate, Spiro Agnew's disgrace and the rising flood of embarrassments in the Nixon White House plainly contributed last month to the defeat of Arlen Specter, the ambitious 43-year-old District Attorney of Philadelphia.

The bad news from Washington is also drying up the party's money. Frank McGlinn, a Philadelphia banker and the chief Pennsylvania fund-raiser for the Committee for the Re-election of the President, canceled his annual dinner for Congressional candidates this year because old-time contributors are "turned off on giving when they see last year's money just sitting there at C.R.E.E.P. in Washington, paying legal fees."

Senator Schweiker has raised about \$200,000 for next year's campaign—about half of what he hoped to have in hand at this point. And out in western Pennsylvania Charles Leitch, the Clarion County chairman, says: "My problem since Watergate is raising money even for the county organization. They're saying: 'Ah, wht do you need money for? You must be stealing it anyway.'"

The same White House scandals are evidently turning away Republican voters: Party turnout was under 40 per cent in Philadelphia last month, under 30 per cent in Pittsburgh and about 35 per cent in Beaver County. They are also sapping the organization's morale and effectiveness: "The party organization in Pennsylvania," one of its long-time managers, said "is at its lowest ebb in this century."

In some sense the party is losing respectability. Mrs. Elsie Hillman, a Pittsburgh socialite and patroness of Republican liberals, says that her own friends are saying "they won't have anything to do with the party at all—they're only going to worry about their guy."

But beyond the acute depression among influential Republicans here, what strikes a visitor in dozens of interviews around Pennsylvania is the conviction of helplessness, the air of resignation—the sense that there is no defense for the middle and lower levels of the party from a crushing rockslide at its top.

William Austin Meehan, the Republican boss in Philadelphia who will lose control of nearly 4,000 patronage jobs next year because of Watergate damage

Fitzpatrick by more than 30,000 votes.

The Republican judicial slate went down to defeat in a-heap. Democrats will control Philadelphia's Board of Judges for the first time in modern memory and with it the courthouse jobs—3,000 at a minimum—that had kept the Meehan machine alive.

"Billy Meehan won't admit it," another Pennsylvania Republican says, but the Philadelphia Republican machine is dead for the next five years; it will take at least that long to rebuild."

Mr. Meehan's misfortune puts the statewide party off balance, too. He and Mr. Specter had hoped to play large—perhaps dominant roles in the Governor's race next year, but now they are two more voids in a power vacuum.

Pennsylvania Republicans worry about similar chains of disaster when they talk of 1974.

Voter psychology, says Mr. Heinz, the 35-year-old pickle heir and Republican Representative from Pittsburgh, will be anti-incumbent, anti-politician and anti-Republican—indiscriminately so "except in hotly contested elections where Watergate is clearly not an issue.

Little Enthusiasm Seen

"In unhotly contested elections in Pennsylvania next year," he said. "Republicans won't go and vote. And on the state level," said Mr. Heinz, who considered running for Governor but thought better of the idea. "There will probably be relatively little that's going to make Republicans very enthusiastic. Dick Schweiker is considered by the Republican mainstream to be far too liberal, so there will be no special effort for him."

Neither is it clear, Mr. Heinz, said that Andrew L. Lewis Jr., the front-running Republican for

the Governor's nomination, is the sort of candidate who can rally the party troops.

Mr. Lewis, known as Drew, is a friend, onetime business associate and campaign manager of Senator Schweiker's "a 42-year-old management professional with the bland good looks of a television news announcer. His long lead is by default of the better-known contenders.

Former Governor Scranton, besieged by appeals to run, is standing by the pledge he made seven years ago: "I am not going to run, ever again, for any office, under any circumstances."

Mayor Rizzo, a Democrat for Nixon last year, would likely have been a Republican candidate for Governor if the Nixon Administration were still riding high and if Mr. Rizzo had not flunked a lie-detector test in a political dispute with the city Democratic organization last summer.

Specter Appears Out

Mr. Specter, the man Billy Meehan used to call "a million-dollar piece of property," is heavily discounted since he lost the District Attorney's race.

And finally Mr. Heinz decided he would rather be Senator—if Senator Hugh Scott retires in 1976—and in the meantime he will run for re-election to the House. Mr. Heinz announced he would not run for Governor in mid-October, just before President Nixon dismissed Archibald Cox, the first special Watergate prosecutor, in the "Saturday night massacre" of Oct. 20.

"The only second thoughts I've had," said Mr. Heinz of the Governor's race, "are feelings of relief. Events since then have made it all the harder to elect a Republican. What's the right word," he said, groping for an estimate of the changes — "Unbelievable?"

er votes than the Democrat that Mr. Specter overwhelmed four years ago. But Mr. Specter's own vote was down 145,000 from 1969, and he lost to Mr.