

G.O.P. CHIEFS HERE BID NIXON STAY ON

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But Tristate County Leaders Withhold Any Judgment— 11 Urge Resignation NYTimes

By FRANK LYNN

An overwhelming majority of Republican party officials in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut believe that President Nixon should not resign, but they are withholding judgment on his guilt or innocence in the Watergate scandal, a New York Times survey of 65 party leaders showed yesterday.

However, 11 of these county chairmen in New York and New Jersey and state central committeemen in Connecticut said publicly or privately that Mr. Nixon should resign.

The majority view was expressed by Thomas M. MacKinnon, the Republican chairman of Erie County, which includes Buffalo. "He should not resign; it is a constitutional question and we have a constitutional process we should go by," Mr. MacKinnon said.

"For several months," said W. Harry Sayen, the Mercer County (N.J.) chairman, "there has been a conflict between my idealistic self that says the liberal media is trying to run the President out of office and my pragmatic self that says, 'please leave.' After the release of the

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transcripts, my pragmatic self won."

The interviews of the party leaders over the last four days also turned up the following:

Most believe that Republican candidates, particularly those running for Congress, will be hurt by voter reaction to the scandal.

Few defended Mr. Nixon beyond declarations that he is entitled to due process and a fair trial.

Party officials reacted in a lesser degree to the White House transcripts than Republican members of Congress, most of whom will be seeking re-election this year. The G.O.P. leaders split evenly among those who described the transcripts as particularly damaging to Mr. Nixon and those who felt they were, in effect, more of the same Watergate scandals.

The more urban an area a leader represented, the more likely he was to be harsh in his judgment of the President and the impact of Watergate in the November elections. Party leaders in more rural areas were generally inclined to give the President the benefit of the doubt.

'Bedrock Strength' Rural

Vincent Palmer, Jr., the Republican chairman of Wayne County in New York, echoed other leaders when he said that rural residents represented the President's "bedrock strength."

He added that Mr. Nixon's support was "dwindling down to these kind of people but they will be the last to erode — they feel very loyal to the President and the President happens to be Mr. Nixon; that's not fashionable any more but it still exists in this area."

Yet Mr. Palmer, whose county lies between Rochester and Syracuse, predicted that "it's going to be disastrous for Republicans"—not in his own rural county, but in other areas.

The generally pessimistic and defensive tone of the party officials was particularly significant because they are in effect spokesmen for the party in their areas and generally set the tone for local campaigns.

This theme was sounded repeatedly in the telephone interviews with the tristate leaders. "I don't know whether he's guilty or innocent," said Melvin

Klein, the Republican leader of Queens, a nominally Democratic county that Mr. Nixon won in 1972 "but he's entitled to the same rights and protection as any other citizen."

Call for Resignation

Cross the East River, the State Senator John D. Calandra, called for Mr. Nixon's resignation.

"The President should resign for the good of the country and of the party," Mr. Calandra said, "there is no question that the public has completely lost faith in him and that the transcripts involve him in the cover-up."

Other Republican leaders publicly calling for Mr. Nixon's resignation were H. Robert Nortz of Lewis County and R. Wells Stout of Allegheny County, both in New York, and Richard Seabury of Morris County in New Jersey. Others, such as Donald Cook of Monroe County in New York and W. Robert Hentges of Cape May County in New Jersey, said the President would have to resign if he could not "exonerate" himself soon. Six others called for Mr. Nixon's resignation but declined to be identified.

Their general view was that Mr. Nixon's resignation would help the party in the November elections.

A dissenting view was registered by Mrs. Frances Overlock of New Canaan, a Republican state central committeeman.

"I don't think it would make any difference," she said. "Whether he's in or out, the Democrats are going to continue this issue over the years, and if I were a Democrat I would too."

'Pretty Well Buried'

Another Republican, Donald A. Campbell of Montgomery County, New York, who is also clerk of the State Assembly, said that he could not judge the President's guilt or innocence but added that "the reaction I'm getting is that regardless of the merits, he's pretty well buried at this point, which may be an injustice to him, but it's a fact of life."

Mr. Campbell was one of the leaders, about half of those interviewed, who felt that the Watergate scandal would be felt in the November elections.

One of the most outspoken in this camp was Edwin G. Schwenk, the Republican chairman of Suffolk County, which gave Mr. Nixon his biggest pluralities in the nation in

1968 and 1972. "I think there's no question that Watergate did have an effect last November and it will most certainly have an effect this November — up and down the line, including dogcatcher," Mr. Schwenk said.

This view was particularly strong among Republican county leaders in New Jersey, where Democrats captured the Governorship and both houses of the Legislature last November at least partially, Republicans believe, because of Watergate.

However, Benjamin H. Danskin, chairman of the powerful Monmouth County G.O.P. organization and head of the Republican County Chairmen's Association, said that Watergate would be a "moot" question by November.

"The President will either be exonerated or he'll be gone," Mr. Danskin said.