

ROOKIES IN G.O.P. IGNORE THE CHIEF

Campaign School Teachers
Give Subtle Lessons on
Avoiding Nixon Issue

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WASHINGTON, June 30 — The Republican campaign school for rookie candidates is a set of subtle lessons in ignoring President Nixon and a few tentative suggestions on turning the inflation issue against the Democrats.

On Watergate, candidates are urged to say anything that will help them and, even on the question of impeaching the President, they are discouraged against any commitment to Mr. Nixon's defense. The only essential thing in the impeachment inquiry, said George Bush, chairman of the Republican National Committee, is that "the system works fairly and expeditiously—the Republican party will accept the result."

For four days last week about 110 Republican aspirants for Congress heard instructions on tactics and periodically lined up to be photographed shaking hands with Vice President Ford, Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton, Agriculture Secretary Earl L. Butz and Treasury Secretary William E. Simon.

It was also the candidates' best chance to campaign for shares of the treasury that the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee raises especially for challengers of congressional Democratic incumbents — a Watergate-shrunk fund of about \$650,000, down from \$900,000 in 1972. The campaign committee sponsors the school.

Repeatedly the candidates have been told that their best general theme in 1974 is an attack on the idea of a "veto-proof Congress," which George Meany and his fellow labor leaders have proclaimed and many Democratic politicians have embraced. "God save us," Secretary Butz prayed over lunch with the candidates on Wednesday, "from having George Meany run the United States."

In unusually strong language Thursday evening, Mr. Ford spoke of a veto-proof Congress as a "political catastrophe" that would mean "the demise of individual freedom," the sort of "dictatorship" that American settlers came here to escape.

But another central theme of the campaign school was the lack of a theme—the reminders that every candidate is on his

own and that, at a time when President Nixon is out of favor with 3 of every 4 Americans in the opinion polls, loyalty is a luxury that Republicans can ill-afford.

"Go into those precincts," urged Secretary Morton, a former House member from Maryland, "and make whatever arrangements is necessary to get the most number of votes."

Praise Brings Silence

One suggested "arrangement" is to mention President Nixon only, if at all in connection with foreign policy.

Mr. Morton was greeted with an awkward silence from the candidates Thursday when he referred to Mr. Nixon as "one of the most dynamic Presidents in the history of America."

Mary Louise Smith, co-chairman of the Republican National Committee, who held the ninth in a series of "Grassroots '74" seminars here Friday, explained that she never mentioned the President in regional meetings designed to buoy the party's morale. "We are not here to talk about Watergate, the issue or leaders," she said. "It's a very general presentation."

To James Leach, a 31-year-old former Foreign Service officer who is running for the House in Iowa's First Congressional District, the most important line in Mr. Bush's speech was the assertion that Republicans could "accept" any outcome in the impeachment process. "Bush has made impeachment legitimate," Mr. Leach commented.

Yet Mr. Leach and many of his fellow candidates had anticipated that point in their own campaigns.

"There's no way in the world that I can defend the indefensible," said Doug Harlan, a conservative Texan running for the 21st District seat being vacated by Representative O. C. Fisher, a Democrat. "Let the constitutional procedure go forward. If they find he's guilty of an impeachable offense, impeach him. If not, exonerate him."

There is little pressure to defend the President, Mr. Harlan added, and it comes not from party headquarters in Washington but within the district "from dedicated Republicans who simply can't bear to see the evidence." "But any reasonable person has to have a doubt about [President Nixon's] involvement in the cover-up," he said.

Diarmuid O'Scannlain, a liberal protégé of Oregon's Gov. Tom McCall, hoping to succeed Representative Wendell Wyatt, a Republican who is retiring, took a similarly detached view of Mr. Nixon's predicament. "I agree with the theme of the speakers that you've got to determine what the issue is in your own district and then deal with it according to your own conscience."