

# Nixon's the One Hurting the GOP

By Haynes Johnson

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**B**IRMINGHAM, Ala.—An autographed picture of a smiling Richard Nixon is still displayed alongside the American flag in the Alabama Republican chairman's office. On his desk, and in the front hallway, are other mementos of the Grand Old Party's more recent and pleasant past: a pencil with the campaign slogan "Nixon, Now More Than Ever," a bumper sticker, in bright yellow, saying "Nobody Drowned at Watergate."

Now, surrounded by those reminders of the great Nixon landslide of two years ago, the GOP chairman was discussing with unintentional irony the prospects for a once certain Republican congressional seat. "I'm scared to death," he said.

Two years ago the situation was exactly the opposite. Then, Richard Nixon campaigned more for Richard Nixon (Re-Elect the President) than for his own party. Republicans desperately tried to demonstrate their closeness to him. Billboards and leaflets and TV spots featured Nixon with the local Republican candidate. The closer the arm around the local hopeful the better his chances. A vote for me is a vote for Dick.

Today, when Nixon has become the GOP's Jonah, the Democrats are pouncing on any proven close association with the fallen President as a sign of, at worst, culpability or, at best, gullibility. It has gotten so bad that in one congressional race the Democrats are offering \$700 to anyone who can produce a photograph of a 1972 billboard showing the former President and the Republican congressional candidate side by side.

Try though they may to disassociate from Nixon, the Republicans are finding themselves confronted on all sides with campaign issues that link them to their erstwhile leader. Immorality in government. The Nixon pardon. The Agnew plea. Corrupt campaign contributions. The milk fund.

The Russian wheat deal. The special interests.

Whether Nixon's re-admission to the hospital last Wednesday will have any impact in the closing days of the campaign is an imponderable. A surge of sympathy for a stricken former President is not impossible, but on the current political evidence it seems unlikely. In this first post-Watergate campaign, Richard Nixon's presidency is being made a symbol of grave national problems. The Democrats are running against Nixon administration immorality followed by severe national economic distress just as surely as they campaigned against the corruption of the Harding era leading into the Depression under Herbert Hoover.

## Three Unlikely Races

**N**OWHERE IS this political problem for the Republicans more apparent this fall than in three congressional races in the heart of what once was Nixon country. By all the standards of the past, these races shouldn't even be in question. Three conservative Southern incumbents, all solidly entrenched, all staunch supporters of Nixon, are facing opponents who never ran for Congress before—and all the Republicans are in danger of losing.

In Birmingham, John Buchanan, a Baptist minister, has been in Congress for 10 years. He won his last two congressional elections with 60 per cent of the vote. Nina Miglionico, his challenger, is a diminutive, grandmotherly city councilwoman of Italian extraction who once found a bomb outside her home during the civil rights struggles of the mid-1960s. "Miss Nina," as she is familiarly called, is running on a theme of a double standard of justice in Washington.

In mid-Tennessee, in a sprawling congressional district embracing 19 rural counties stretching along the Mississippi border and running straight north to Kentucky, Robin Beard is a prototype of the earnest young men who were supposed to form the nu-





Associated Press

*"Miss Nina": Hitting the "double standard of justice."*

cleus of the so-called emerging Republican majority in the South. Two years ago, at the age of 33, he swept into office as Nixon carried 72 per cent of his district. His opponent, Tim Schaeffer, who frankly concedes his initial prospects seemed "slim," is running a populist kind of campaign attacking monopolies, preferential big business treatment, excess profits and what he calls the rapid transfer of wealth from the lowest three-fifths of society to the upper fifth.

In Memphis, Dan Kuykendall has been in Congress for eight years. As much as any Republican in Congress, he has gloried in his personal associations with Nixon. After Nixon resigned, it was Kuykendall who got one of the rare telephone calls from the former President. "Do you think the jackals want to pick the carcass?" Nixon asked. Kuykendall's opponent this fall is Harold Ford, a 29-year-old black whose older brother is known and feared by whites in Memphis as a radical. "His name is just a bomb in this city," Ford says of his brother. Even though a veteran labor leader says "statistically, this is an impossible race" for the Democrats, Ford is given fair chance to win.

More important than the outcome of

any of these races is the way in which the Democrats have been able to put together a wide range of issues into an effective political package. They seem to be succeeding in tying the moral issues flowing out of Watergate to the economic ills of the country—and in painting the Republicans as the party of privilege, wealth, deals and corruption in high places.

These are hardly unfamiliar Democratic themes. For years they have been running on the problems of the Depression era, but as American prosperity multiplied those old chestnuts became stale. Now, perhaps for the first time since Harry Truman in 1948, Democrats are successfully evoking echoes of the Thirties and the New Deal. Franklin Roosevelt used to talk about the plight of the forgotten man. Today's Democrats are talking about the problems confronting the common man. They are arousing whatever remains of party loyalties in a day in which more voters think of themselves as independents and party labels mean increasingly less. And the heart of their approach is to attack the Republicans as the party of the special interests and of Nixonian immorality.

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Just how powerful this can be this year is exemplified in the three Southern races where new Democratic faces are trying to oust the Republican incumbents. That each is given a chance to win only underscores how difficult Republican prospects are nationally this fall. Small wonder that Gerald Ford, who was campaigning and sampling political sentiment last week, is becoming increasingly strident and alarmist in his appeals to prevent a Democratic congressional sweep. He is now resorting to saying a great Democratic victory not only will mean the Capitol dome will be sold off by the big spenders, but that larger Democratic majorities in House and Senate will imperil peace.

### Attacking the Pardon

**Y**ET FORD HIMSELF has contributed to Republican problems. In each of the three races, the Nixon pardon has become a major issue for the Democrats.

In Birmingham, Nina Miglionico has made the pardon a key example of what she calls a "double standard of justice" in Washington. As soon as the pardon was announced, she began attacking it.

"At a time when every news report indicates that crime is on the rise," she said in one speech, "it is impossible to justify the unprecedented presidential pardon of Richard Nixon. Not only does this action prevent the people of our country from learning the true extent of Nixon's involvement in the Watergate crimes, but it sets a horrible example for judges and juries faced with dealing with other Americans who have committed far less serious crimes."

She also used the pardon directly against her opponent, John Buchanan.

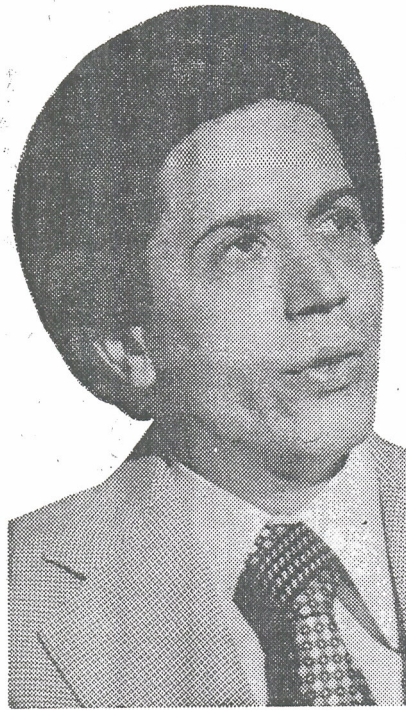
"I am also astounded that our incumbent representative in the U.S. Congress not only supported the Nixon pardon," she said, "but actually helped to implement the pardon through introduction of a resolution in the House of Representatives."

She says it lessens respect for law and order, decreases faith in government and shows there are two standards operating, one for the mighty, another for the ordinary. But "Miss Nina" does not let it lie there. In her campaign, the pardon becomes a symbol of a double standard not only in justice, but in the economy and other areas of American life.

"There's a feeling among the average people," she said in an interview, "that the bigger people are getting a break. In these tough times, it's the average person who is taking the brunt of inflation, and they know someone else is getting a break."

"They're talking about the money squeeze. They'll start out with money invariably. The surtax has cemented the division. All they get out of it is another example of a double standard. Here they are, asked to pay a 5 per cent surtax, and there's Mr. Rockefeller giving away \$2 million. Here's the former president with two big homes. It all cements a feeling that they're not being treated right."

"They feel threatened economically, and there's a great fear among peo-



United Press International Photos

### Memphis' Ford: Avoiding TV.

ple. They know that social security will not be enough when they retire, and yet they know they can't work and keep their social security. And then they read about Adm. [Thomas H.] Moorer [former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff] going to work for the Blount enterprises in Montgomery [headed by Winton M. Blount, Nixon's former Postmaster General] and this raises another question about a double standard. It's evident in taxes, it's evident in so many areas."

In other years, Nina Miglionico probably would have been discounted as a potential member of Congress. At 60, she doesn't have youth or charisma or fame or family connections to help her. Indeed, she seems to run contrary to the old stereotypes about Birmingham. She is a Catholic, bearing an ethnic name, and had been associated with trying to obtain equal opportunities in a community bitterly divided over the race issue. When elected to the city council 11 years ago, she was the first Catholic to win a place in local government in 66 years, as well as the first woman officeholder. But this clearly is not a normal election year, and "Miss Nina" is giving the popular Buchanan, a prominent Baptist son of Birmingham, what all agree is his hardest contest to date.

"If there had been no Watergate his position would have been infinitely stronger," she said. "I think Watergate brings the question of leadership and integrity to the fore. Here is a minister who was not affected by any of the things that happened in Washington. He did not have to take a position on the President's guilt or nonguilt. He could have said, 'If these things are true, then they have no part in the American system of government.' In fact, he took a position of strong support. He said these things were not true."

"People think he's been gulled or fooled, not that he's dishonest." Or, at least she believes people in Birmingham think that, and is counting on that conviction to carry her to victory two weeks from now.

Tim Schaeffer's race in mid-Tennessee

has many of the same political elements. Like Nina Miglionico, he is a lawyer who is using Watergate and morality in a once solidly conservative district.

"Watergate was an outrage to me," he said in an interview. "The very idea that the people of this country could have a president and vice president both forced to resign their offices because of crimes—and unrelated crimes—is the gravamen of that question to me. It just shows how terrible the situation is. My wife actually formed a group last year right after the Saturday night massacre to get up petitions to call for the impeachment or resignation of Nixon, and when the thing began to get worse and worse and worse that's why I decided to run."

"It's a funny thing. When we started out [Ray] Blanton [Democratic candidate for governor in Tennessee] thought Watergate ought not to be made an issue, and they were worried to death I was going to make that a big issue and it would embarrass his gubernatorial campaign. But now the Watergate question has seeped back into the campaign by a lot of speakers in Tennessee. One reason is because this part of the country lags behind the rest in the formation of its public opinion."

"I think that while a majority of the country had turned against Nixon, he still had a majority for him here. But it gradually catches up. The fact of the resignation, and the realization that he really was guilty—well, when it hit it hit hard. You know, these people down here gave him a whopping majority two years ago. Now it's like the reaction of jilted lovers. They just got mad as hell. And then when the pardon came along (and everything was looking better for the Republicans up until then) and that hit, I mean it got down to the grass roots conservatism of this district. These people, who believe in equal justice under the law, were just appalled at that."

Schaeffer has been flying around his huge rural district in a plane, sounding like an old-fashioned Populist stump-speaker.





Lawyer Schaeffer: Populist talk.

"What I see as a far greater issue than Watergate," he says, "is what Nixon has done to the country, which hasn't come to the surface yet. Such as preferential business treatment, the business combines, laxity in enforcing the antitrust laws, allowing price-fixing capabilities to infiltrate into all segments of the economy, including the food industry, the petroleum industry and so many other industries. Then there's these sales of wheat to the Soviet Union—wild deals like that—that benefit the special business interests and are so detrimental to the economy right now.

"These are what I see as posing the greatest damage done by Watergate. The little burglary didn't hurt a soul. It was a mere manifestation of the willingness on the part of those people to engage in skulduggery—and they've engaged in a lion's share of so much that we know nothing about."

### The City Man

SCHAEFFER, A BULKY, balding man, gets more wound up as he speaks. "My net worth now is over \$1 million. I started out from scratch and I earned it. My income is way and above a congressman's, so I'm not running for a job. I'm running, by Jove, because I don't like what's going on in Washington. I don't like the immorality that's going on. I don't like the incumbents' protective society the Congress has become, and I'll do everything in my power to stop that. They wouldn't be able to give me enough milk money to make me want to change my approach."

Tennessee politicians had thought his opponent, Robin Beard, was headed for a long career in Congress. They also privately believed that Schaeffer, with his lucrative law practice based in Memphis, was too much of a big city man, and probably too liberal, to appeal to the rural 6th District.

Schaeffer fully recognized his problems. "When I originally set out to run, Martha (his wife) and I both agreed that my chances would be slim, that I'd have little chance to win be-

cause I'm a city lawyer running in an essentially rural district. Well, I was raised in the country. As I go around, I say I can't help it because Memphis is my county seat; that's where I have to go to the courthouse to practice my profession. But I grew up in the country and didn't even have a bathroom in my house until I was in high school. My father was a school bus driver and later my mother followed him on the school bus route and I grew up working in a service station and an ice house and throwing newspapers after school. When I get that over to people, I can relate to them."

As with Nina Miglionico, that remains to be proven. But it is generally agreed that if any seat in Tennessee changes hands because of Watergate this year, it will be Robin Beard's in the 6th District.

Of all these races, the most difficult to assess is that of Dan Kuykendall vs. Harold Ford in Memphis. Ford, the young black, is expressing supreme confidence. "We need 85,000 votes to win, and we've got 'em locked up," he says. He cites four polls showing him comfortably ahead. That, of course, is standard political tactics. No one releases a poll showing himself behind.

But the latest poll commissioned by Kuykendall shows the race a virtual dead heat. It gives Kuykendall 50.9 per cent and Ford 49.1 per cent. More significantly, it details how sharply this election has divided along racial lines.

Of black voters polled, only eight-tenths of 1 per cent said they favored the white Republican candidate. Of whites, only 12 per cent backed the black Democrat.

Memphis is still a racially polarized city, and the congressional district sharply reflects those emotions. Approximately 44 per cent of the registered voters are black, but their turnout is generally lower than the whites. And Memphis has never elected a black to Congress, not even during Reconstruction days following the Civil War.

Ford is trying to play down the race question. He does not use TV commercials, for instance, instead campaigning from door to door. He frankly admits that the sight of a black congressional candidate on TV might inspire a larger white turnout against him. "We don't want to bring them out to vote against us," he says.

Nevertheless, race underlies this struggle. Kuykendall's billboards urge the voter to reelect "your" congressman. The "your" is underlined twice. His campaign leaflets attack "the Ford machine"—Harold, his older brother John, who is on the city council, and his younger brother Emmitt, "who simply wants to be the third cylinder in the Ford machine."

The implied message is far from subtle: The blacks are about to take over Memphis.

### "Go to Hell"

FUELING THESE racial fears are two incidents that have inflamed white Memphis. On primary day, Aug. 1, guards were seen accompanying Harold and John Ford to the polling places. Last month the Shelby County election commission asked the city council to enact an ordinance barring armed

guards from within 1,000 feet of polling places in the November general election. The action was taken, the commission explained, to prevent the possibility of a shoot-out between armed guards of rival candidates.

On top of that came a widely publicized incident involving John Ford. In a dispute over parking in the city hall garage, Ford told a white woman on the city council to "go to hell." A subsequent council move to censure Ford failed by only one vote. Coming only three weeks before the election, the censure move clearly hurt Harold Ford among white voters.

Now, when he appears before the voters, he attempts to play down the problems created by his controversial brother. "I'm not Gerald Ford, I'm not Henry Ford and I'm not John Ford," he tells audiences. Asked about his brother at a recent appearance, he said, with a smile, "If I was on the city council I would have seconded the motion/ to censure John."

Given all these factors, plus the long-established position of Dan Kuykendall in Memphis, the wonder is not that the race is even but that Kuykendall is not invincible.

### Variety of Attacks

HAROLD FORD, like Nina Miglionico and Tim Schaeffer, has campaigned on a people-vs-the-interests platform. He also is striking hard at Kuykendall's closeness to Nixon.

"We've taken his record," he says, "pieced it together, and we're just determined to show we can beat him on that record. Here's a man who in 1973 supported Richard Nixon 74 per cent of the time. In that period, he supported Nixon on the Russian wheat deal. He supported Nixon on Watergate. He supported Nixon on everything he's been proven wrong. We continually bring it up. And we show that his financial contributions in 1972 came from the same place Nixon's came from. We try to show he's part of the special interests rather than representing the needs of human beings."

He also attacks the Nixon pardon, repeatedly referring to it as the "premature pardon," and the state of the economy.

"It's a different race altogether this time," he says, "totally different. I believe whites are so concerned about their pocket books they haven't had time to think about race."

Again, the election results may prove him wrong, but his strong race already has accentuated the problems facing Republicans this year.

In each of the three Southern races, Republican campaign workers say they are worried about apathy, frustration and discontent among their regular voters and what they fear is an undercurrent working against their incumbents.

Richard Bennett, the Alabama Republican chairman, expressed the disquiet best. "I've run into an apathetic feeling throughout the state. More so than in the past. I would have said six months ago that there would be hardly any impact because of Watergate. But now it's detrimental. People are disillusioned—and more disillusioned, I think, over Agnew than Nixon. Agnew was a big hero down here. Now there's a feeling, 'My God, who can you trust?'"