

Inflation, Scandal Did In the GOP

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In the end, it was a stam-pede.

The Republican party, despite hard last-minute work by its professionals, simply crumbled under the combined weight of the country's economic tribulations and the scandals of the Nixon administration.

"We got our vote out," said L. Keith Bulen, the energetic Republican honcho in Indiana. "But a quarter, maybe even a third of them couldn't bring themselves to vote for us. The bottom just fell out all the way down the line." In Indiana alone, five incumbent Republicans were defeated, and so was Bulen's protege, Mayor Richard Lugar of Indianapolis.

In almost every close House race, and in most of the close races for Senate and governor, the balance tipped to the Democrats. New Jersey, Virginia, Connecticut — all were disaster areas for the party of Richard Nixon.

The impact of Watergate was unmistakable.

Among the House Republicans who lost were Mr. Nixon's point men in the days when he was still clinging to office — Representatives David W. Dennis and Earl F. Landgrebe in Indiana, and Representatives Charles W. Sandman Jr. and Joseph J. Mariziti in New Jersey.

The election in Maine of an independent gubernatorial candidate — a candidate who openly described himself as an "anti-politician" — was construed by politicians there as an obvious expression of disgust at scandal and corruption.

And in New Hampshire, the surprisingly weak showing of Representative Louis C. Wyman in his Senate race — he was trailing his Democratic opponent — seemed at least partly traceable to

his peripheral involvement in one Watergate episode.

Precincts with high unemployment showed a four per cent swing away from the Republicans, according to NBC News, and precincts with unusually high rates of inflation showed a seven per cent swing away from the Republicans. Less scientific soundings indicated that the economy had hurt everywhere.

In terms of the next two years of the political cycle, President Ford is presented with herculean problems by the election results. The problem is not that his vetoes will be automatically overturned: Congress seldom splits along straight partisan lines in such matters. But his party will be so shrunk on Capitol Hill that he will be hard put to advance his programs.

Moreover, his vigorous campaigning for Republican candidates was a failure. Not even in his home district in Michigan was he able to put across a House candidate who had been given an excellent chance.

Representative Stanford Parris, a Virginia Republican with an apparently safe seat, was the first man for whom Mr. Ford stumped. He was defeated, too.

Mr. Ford would have been criticized had he not campaigned when his party was in trouble; now he will be criticized for having had no impact. However unfair that conclusion may be, his prestige in the Republican party will be eroded.

Mr. Ford will now be obliged to spend some of his time rebuilding his party, if he and it are to have a chance in the 1976 presidential campaign. His problem will be complicated by the drubbing the Republicans took in the governorship races in major states.

It appeared possible that the Democrats might emerge from the late tabulations in control of the governors' mansion in the ten largest states — and the governors' mansions are important building blocks in

campaigns.

But the Democrats, despite their sweep, will face problems in the next two years as well. With their lopsided margins in Congress, they will be obligated to formulate positive programs instead of railing at the White House, and the Democratic leaders concede that that will be difficult.

"I hope it isn't too big a landslide," one of them said before the voting. "I'm not sure that we can stand success."

At the same time, the often-fractious Democrats will be searching for a presidential nominee, searching, as a result of the voting, among as many as a dozen hopefuls.

Among those whose victories immediately projected them into the national picture were Hugh Carey in New York, John Glenn and perhaps John J. Gilligan in Ohio, Birch Bayh in Indiana, and George C. Wallace in Alabama.

They will join such semi-announced aspirants as Senators Walter F. Mondale of Minnesota, Lloyd M. Bentsen of Texas and Henry M. Jackson of Washington.

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