

# Nixon Gives the G.O.P. Chairman More Authority as

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WASHINGTON, March 26.—When a Republican Governor from the West called at the White House a few weeks ago to discuss a political matter, he was told he was in the wrong place. The people he wanted to see, he was told by the White House staff, were at the Republican National Committee.

Incidents like that are becoming more frequent, reflecting an unorthodox decision by President Nixon as he looks ahead to the 1974 Congressional elections. For the time being at least, the White House political operation has been disbanded, and the national committee, under its new chairman, George Bush, has taken over the liaison and patronage roles.

Historically, the chairmen of parties in power have lacked clout.

Under John F. Kennedy, for example, John M. Bailey was the party chairman, but Lawrence F. O'Brien at the White House was the man to see. Similarly, Senator Robert Dole was the party chairman during most of Mr. Nixon's first term, but the man to see was Harry S. Dent, the White House operative.

## Dent Still Active

Mr. Dent has returned to Columbia, S. C., to practice law, but he remains active in party affairs as the national committee's general counsel. White House sources say he could have his old job back any time he wanted it, and even in his work for the committee, he plays a key role.

"He remembers the names," a senior White House aide said this week—meaning, presumably, that Mr. Dent knows who owes the White House and whom the White House owes.

But Mr. Dent spends only a few hours a week on party business, so the burden falls to Mr. Bush. Mr. Nixon is still the party leader, of course, and he has made it clear to staff members and outsiders that the former Texas Representative and former United Nations Ambassador is his man.

At a meeting with the House Republican leaders not long ago, for example, Mr. Nixon went out of his way to tell them to clear something with Mr. Bush. It was not a legis-

the President, was fatally flawed. The strategy, which kept the President's campaign strictly separated from others, resulted in a landslide for him but the election of another Democratic Congress.

The goal at the committee these days is to win for the party's Congressional nominees the backing of the Democrats and independents who swelled Mr. Nixon's majority last fall—"to turn the new Nixon majority into the new Republican majority," as Mr. Bush said in an interview.

Thus, while Richard Thaxton works on patronage questions, Mr. Bush will devote much of his considerable energy and youthful charm to candidate recruitment. The new formula is something like this: Get good candidates; they will attract money; they will buy organization; they will win.

In other words, the old grass-roots organizational theory has been turned on its head.

Once again, the idea stems from one of Mr. Nixon's the-

ories. He has told associates repeatedly that the principal reason for the party's poor showing in the 1970 Congressional elections was "too many hacks" as candidates. A typical example, mentioned often by White House aides, is Richard L. Roubush, defeated for the Senate by Vance Hartke in Indiana.

Much of the detail work in this area is in the hands of Kenneth Reitz, a young political organizer who won plaudits at the White House for his work with young voters in the

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1972 campaign, following his successful handling of the 1970 senatorial campaign of Senator William E. Brock of Tennessee.

Mr. Reitz's association with Mr. Brock and then with Mr. Bush, and their common association with James Allison, another professional organizer, has led to complaints about a "Southern Mafia" in Republican politics. A Middle Western party chairman, for example, says that "it's all a front for the 1976 Brock campaign for President, and everyone knows it."

To which one White House official replied, incredulously: "That's a power center?"

The new structure notwithstanding, there are still dissatisfactions among some party regulars.

"You can't even get a telephone call returned from the White House unless you're a Southerner," said L. Keith Bulen, the Indiana national committeeman. "They don't care diddly-damn for us or for the state chairmen, either."

Others, including some in the

lative matter; that remains a White House prerogative. But political and patronage questions go to the committee.

Why the change?

One Republican politician privy to Mr. Nixon's thinking argues that "for the first time in his career, the President's interests coincide with those of the party."

## No Re-election Worries

With no need to worry about his own re-election, Mr. Nixon no longer need concern himself with standing aloof from party infighting, as he has done in the past. So he no longer needs to have an independent political organization.

Thus, it makes sense—or so this line of argument goes—to identify the White House with the national party structure and work for the election of Congressional candidates.

Mr. Nixon has also concluded, according to one of his aides, that the 1972 strategy developed by H. R. Haldeman, his chief of staff, and Clark MacGregor, head of the Committee for the re-election of

White House, are worried about what they regard as a tendency to enforce ideological purity from the top down.

Mr. Bush conceded that that was one of his problems. Does the committee decide early on whom it supports, he asked, and then try to head off primaries? How much does it rely on local judgment of the state political scene?

"There are a lot of mine fields I have to walk through," Mr. Bush said. "We have a lot of unanswered questions. But so far, we have had superb

cooperation from the White House staff, and we have more Congressmen and Governors in this office in recent weeks than we've had in years."

Though he is a staunch loyalist, Mr. Bush apparently intends to stand up to the widely feared White House staff. Just after he took over, according to a colleague, the White House sent him the text of a letter with a peremptory note telling him to sign it and send it out. He refused, and no such orders have been forthcoming since.