

DOLE SAYS TRIALS MIGHT HARM G.O.P.

Fears Action on Documents Could Arouse War Foes

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Senator Robert Dole, the Republican National Chairman, said today that any decision to prosecute criminally the distributor of the Pentagon papers or the newspapers that printed them could be politically harmful to the Republican party.

"That would head up the whole antiwar feeling again," Senator Dole predicted. "Prosecuting [Daniel] Ellsberg would attract attention and give the antiwar group new momentum, new force. That would not be

an asset for the Republican party."

The Kansas Republican said he was not suggesting that any violation of law should be ignored, adding, "But someone has a tough decision to make." Earlier he said of the possibility of prosecution, "From a political standpoint, it might have some minuses."

At a breakfast meeting with reporters, the party chairman took the position that the publication of the Pentagon papers and the ensuing civil court action had not raised any particular trouble for the Administration or the Republican cause and indicated he would prefer to let it go at that.

"I never really got too exercised," Senator Dole declared. "I don't think there was too much new involved. The Attorney General did what he thought he ought to, and he lost. I haven't heard of any great anguish around Washington.

"If nothing had been done at

all, the Administration would have been charged with trying to play politics," he continued. "The only question in my mind is why the Attorney General waited two days before going to court."

Senator Dole expressed serious concern over the potential impact of economic conditions on President Nixon's re-election effort of 1972. He said he believed the picture was improving but was unsure if the progress was rapid enough.

"Whether it's coming along fast enough worries most of us," the chairman said. "There is some anguish among Republicans that there is not enough movement."

If unemployment should be as high as 7 per cent a year from now, he declared, it would be "devastating" for the Republican cause.

Mr. Dole said that he did not anticipate any change in the Republican ticket in 1972 although the decision to retain or drop Vice President Agnew

remained in the hands of the President. Asked to assess Mr. Agnew as a political asset and liability, the chairman replied:

"Among conservatives, he is very strong, outspoken and loyal to the President. Some conservatives feel he's more conservative than the President and strengthens the ticket. He has this kind of basic strength everywhere I've been around the country.

"But among young people there is rather strong anti-Agnew feeling. They seem to feel if you attack one of them, you attack them all. This is a problem area, and so are so-called Liberal-Republicans."

Later, the chairman reported that results of registration of new teen-age voters "aren't very appealing the way we look at it." Part of the reluctance of young people to identify with the Republican party, he said, was because "they are hung up on Agnew for statements he's made about the war and radclibs."