

Poll on Public Confidence

Trust in the GOP Slips

By George Gallup

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Republican Party strategists who maintain the perennial issues of peace and prosperity will overshadow Watergate in coming congressional elections can take little comfort from the latest Gallup survey.

The findings show the GOP has fallen far behind the Democratic Party since 1972 as the party that voters see as better able to keep the country prosperous. Republicans have also lost ground, but to a lesser extent, on the issue of peace.

Three decades of polling experience have shown "peace" and "prosperity" to be key issues in virtually all the national elections. Furthermore, a close relationship can be found between how the voters rate the two parties and their relative abilities to deal with these two problems and the voters' presidential preference in election surveys.

On the issue of prosperity, the GOP has declined 19 points since 1972. Two years ago the Republicans held a marginal 38 to 35 per cent lead over the Democrats on this issue. Today, however, about half the public (49 per cent) believe the Democrats better able to keep the nation prosperous.

The GOP has also slipped since 1972 on the issue of peace, but to a much lesser extent. In the 1972 survey, the GOP had a slight edge, 32 to 28 per cent, on this issue. Now the edge goes to the Democrats, 33 to 24 per cent.

The Vietnam peace settlement in January 1973 — which boosted President Nixon's popularity to an all-time high — his over-

tures to Peking and Moscow and, more recently, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's efforts to maintain peace in the Middle East can all be considered to be factors behind the relative stability of the GOP figure on the peace issue in contrast to the party's sharp decline on the issue of prosperity.

The following tables compare the latest results with those recorded in the last survey in which these questions were asked (conducted in mid-September, 1972):

Question: "Looking ahead for the next few years, which political party—The Republican or the Democratic—do you think will do a better job of keeping the country pros-