

Bush Says GOP Fate Not Inseparable From Nixon's

Washington

Republican National Chairman George Bush conceded yesterday that Watergate helped the Democrats win four special congressional elections and disputed a White House statement that the fates of the President and the GOP are inseparable.

Bush declined to speculate on that fate and said that others — especially the Judiciary Committee members judging the President — shouldn't either.

"Let the system work," he repeatedly said in a broadcast interview on ABC's "Issues and Answers."

Asked about the political effects of Watergate on the recent special congressional elections, Bush replied, "I think it has hurt us this year."

"I could make a very good case last year that (Watergate) wasn't being hit," he added. "This year, we've lost four out of five special

elections and I think it's fair to say that an ingredient in those was Watergate."

But next November, he said, "It's not going to be enough to hammer away at Watergate and be elected."

Referring to a recent statement by presidential Aide Dean Burch that the fortunes of the President and the party "are as one," Bush said they are "not that closely" linked.

"You're saying them," he was asked, "that the fate of the party, this fall and beyond, is not tied to that of the President?"

"Not inextricably interwoven," Bush replied. "To some degree, it is. Certainly the President's the head of the party and let's put it this way: if we're going to take the rap on the bad stuff—and we might, to some degree—let's be sure we get credit for the major accom-

plishments."

Bush and other Republicans also conceded that Watergate and Mr. Nixon's fading popularity have hurt GOP fundraising.

"I'm having a great deal of trouble raising money," Senator William Brock (Rep-Tenn.), chairman of the Senate Republican Campaign Committee, said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

Both men, along with Representative Robert Michel, head of the House Republican Campaign Committee, rejected a suggestion attributed to Senator Barry M. Goldwater (Rep-Ariz.) that, if impeached, the President should step down rather than subject the party and the country to the ordeal of a trial in the Senate.

"I'm just unalterably opposed to that route," Michel said in a joint appearance with Brock.

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