

# Reagan Sees an Advantage In Carter's Focus on Nixon

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SALT LAKE CITY, July 16— Ronald Reagan returned to friendly Western territory this evening, empty-handed in his two-day search for delegates in New Jersey and Pennsylvania but still outwardly sanguine in his race against President Ford.

The only good news the California conservative tried to claim in the East this week developed at the Democratic convention. He pointed specifically to Jimmy Carter's choice of Senator Walter F. Mondale, a prominent liberal, as his running mate and, more important, to the focus of democratic rhetoric on the Nixon scandal that gave birth to the Ford Administration.

Mr. Reagan does not need to mention Mr. Ford's Watergate legacy, he said today, because the Democrats are making the point for him.

"I think they've made it pretty plain throughout the entire convention that they've set their campaign plan with that." The difference, Mr. Reagan said, if he is the Republican nominee, "would lie in the fact that I wasn't there" when Vice President Agnew resigned in disgrace and President Nixon gave way to the pressures of impeachment.

Mr. Reagan visited the Civil War battlefield at Gettysburg, Pa., this morning, more as a tourist and history buff than as a campaigner, before flying west in his chartered jet from Harrisburg.

## Unruffled by Carter

At an airport news conference he brushed off Mr. Carter's references to him yesterday as an "actor" and a right-wing fringe candidate. "I just don't think his charges can stand up in the face of my record," said Mr. Reagan, who was a governor for twice as long as Mr. Carter was, and of a much larger state.

Mr. Reagan made no visible dents in President Ford's delegate majorities in New Jersey Wednesday or in Pennsylvania yesterday, but the situation is not quite what it seems, the candidate said.

The scores of Pennsylvania delegates he talked with are "well aware" of Mr. Ford's vulnerability to Watergate taunts from the Democrats, he said. "I don't know an actual delegate count, but I'm satisfied with the trip. I think we made a good deal of headway."

At Utah's Republican state convention tomorrow, Reagan aides are almost certain of winning all 20 national delegates being chosen, they said. The only question here, they said, is whether Senator Jake Garn, a popular partisan who is backing Mr. Ford, can talk his way onto the delegation.

At the same time, Mr. Rea-

gan will be losing ground overall if, as his staff expected, Mr. Ford sweeps up all 35 of Connecticut's delegates tomorrow when the selection of 2,259 Republican National Convention delegates comes to an end.

Not counting those final 55 delegates yet to be chosen, The New York Times's tabulation of the Republican race now counts 1,067 delegates for Mr. Ford and 1,043 for Mr. Reagan, and 94 delegates who are not firmly pledged. In the month remaining before the showdown at Kansas City, Mr. Reagan must capture at least two-thirds of the unaligned delegates.

That seems a formidable challenge, but no one in the Reagan entourage concedes the conventional wisdom of the press and party professionals that the odds have turned against the California challenger.

"Headlines don't get delegates," commented James Lake, the Reagan press secretary, acknowledging the downbeat notices on Mr. Reagan's Eastern foray. Delegates will be converted rather by the intense individual solicitation by the Reagan staff that remained behind, Mr. Lake said. He promised that important conversions to the Reagan column would be announced next week.