

G.O.P. Chiefs Deny Ford Aides Access To Contributor List

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 7—The Republican National Committee, caught in an unusual campaign crossfire, has refused to give the President Ford Committee access to its mailing list of major political contributors.

The committee, traditionally the obedient servant of any incumbent President, has decided to make available to Ronald Reagan, the former California Governor challenging Mr. Ford for the nomination, any services that it furnishes the President, including fund-raising assistance.

Acting on their own initiative with a keen sense of self-preservation, Republican committee leaders have begun conversations with Citizens for Reagan, making contingency plans for cooperation in the 1976 general election in case Mr. Reagan should be nominated.

The Republican Party has never had to face this vexing internal problem before. When Democratic challenges arose to President Truman in 1952 and President Johnson in 1968, the party's National Committee unwaveringly supported the incumbent.

During the Administrations

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of Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1953-61 and Richard M. Nixon in 1969-74, it would have been unthinkable for the National Committee to offer any sort of cooperation to a candidate challenging the President.

Difficulties for Ford

The National Committee's reluctance to assist President Ford with fund-raising comes at a time when he is encountering serious difficulty building a campaign chest for the primary elections.

With the New Hampshire primary less than three months

pledge by both candidates that they would turn their contribution lists over to the National Committee after the national convention. Another would be a promise by each campaign committee to raise \$500,000 or an agreed amount to compensate the National Committee.

The Republican controversy has given party officials a sense of the problems faced by the Democratic National Committee and its chairman, Robert S. Strauss, in finding a neutral course among 10 present contenders for their party's Presidential nomination.

The Republican committee director made it clear in a weekend interview that no services would be provided to either of the Presidential candidates without charge.

The National Committee has

away, the President Ford Committee has raised only \$1,250,000, of which about \$565,000 is eligible for Federal matching subsidies. Under the new campaign law, a candidate can spend as much as \$10 million, public and private money, in the primaries.

H. Edward Mahe Jr., executive director of the Republican National Committee, said it had decided to maintain "an advocacy position for the Administration" on issues but to be "neutral as far as political organization goes."

"Any services or facts or information that we provide for Presidential candidates will go to both campaigns," he said. "We will not make any financial contributions to either of them during the primaries."

This decision, under Republi-

can rules, could not be made by the 162-member National Committee but only by the National Chairman, Mary Louise Smith, and the executive director, Mr. Mahe, together with other staff officers. The full committee has no authority to make such political decisions or to set policy on issues. Its only official function is to plan for the next national convention.

'Still Negotiating'

Mr. Mahe said the party was "still negotiating internally" about the National Committee's list of contributors, which he called "our lifeblood." He indicated that if it were released to both the President and Mr. Reagan, the committee would want some considerations in return. One possibility would be a

paid for several hundred thousand dollars worth of political travel by the President in 1975, but the Federal Election Commission has ruled that such payments will not be considered campaign spending subject to the candidates' limits until 1976.

Committee officials have also weighed the possibility that a third or fourth Republican Presidential contender might emerge as a result of the Ford-Reagan competition. Someone like Vice President Rockefeller or Senator Charles McC. Mathias of Maryland.

The National Committee has decided to extend its services equally to any Republican who publicly announces his candidacy and then raises enough campaign money to qualify for Federal primary subsidies. That requirement is \$5,000 in each

of 20 states in amounts of \$250 and less.

As part of its current effort to remain a stabilizing force in the party, the Republican committee has persuaded both the Ford and Reagan groups to write letters to their primary contributors, urging them to make a second contribution to the National Committee to help finance its activities during the general election.

Under the new campaign law, each major party candidate gets a \$20 million Federal subsidy for the general election and can spend no more private money, but national committees are given the right to make further contributions of about \$3 million to their Presidential candidates and lesser amounts to Congressional candidates, if they can raise the money.

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