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# Republicans vs. Republicans

The real crisis in Washington is not so much between a Republican President and a Democratic Congress as between two Republican parties now drawing up against each other.

Mr. Nixon's "confrontation" with Capitol Hill on his legislative program and especially his shake-up of welfare is the year's most over-advertised melodrama. He is winning the game with Congress almost daily on spending and allied issues.

It is the second game, a game of rising bitterness between the Republicans of the congressional and State House wings and the tough and aggressive White House Republicans, that truly counts.

The former make up what might be described as the old and traditional GOP; the latter the new. The old GOP is genuinely aghast at Mr. Nixon's handling of what is commonly called "Watergate"—the bugging last year of Democratic headquarters in the Watergate building. "Watergate" is in fact, however, only a shorthand term for a cumulative series of collateral disclosures pointing to the very rough use of very large sums of money, some of it seemingly not too "clean" even by the highly relaxed standards of campaign financing.

It is not the bugging but rather it is the money that is biting so deep. Two senators who have long been on the President's side have told this columnist within recent days that a deep wedge is being driven between him and the whole of the Republican membership of the Senate, conservative and liberal alike. The fear at the Capitol is that a metaphorical cartoon showing the GOP to be a bloated Mr. Money Bags, rather like the caricatures of the capitalist of 50 years ago, is rising in the people's vision all over the country.

This is why so stalwart an old-line Republican as Barry Goldwater is publicly asking Mr. Nixon to speak out in explanation of "Watergate."

All the Republicans at the Capitol want two things: A clear statement that the President himself was not involved and a house cleaning of the White House palace guard if and as others may be found to have been involved in too much money too loosely used.

It is by any measure a most curious situation. Few believe the President to have had any prior knowledge. All believe he ought to say so to the country. Thus far, the President's essential support on legislative issues has been in no way weakened. The question is

whether this support can be maintained.

The mood is one of frustration at his adamant refusal to see the "money issue" as a grave one. The ultimate concern is that unless he concedes, first, that the air must be cleared and, second, that he is the one to clear it, he will injure his administration, the Republican Party generally and, most of

all, the cause of civilized conservatism itself.

The old Republican Party, the party of the GOP in Congress and in the State Houses, thinks, in short, that the President is endangering an otherwise admirable public record and compromising his capacity to deliver more of the same.

No intra-party division quite like

this one has been seen before. For underlying all else is a feeling by the old GOP that while it is the party of the well-to-do, the President's associates represent a party not only of the very rich but also of the very arrogant. Mr. Nixon himself is not unpopular, but not so much can be said of the young and highly self-sure White House aides who so often speak in his name.

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