

Gallup Poll Hints Scandal Dims G.O.P.'s '74 Outlook

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WASHINGTON, May 9 — Three persons in 10 are less likely than before to vote for Republican candidates in the 1974 Congressional election because of the Watergate conspiracy case, the Gallup Poll reported today.

The finding, coupled with the poll's determination that President Nixon's popularity had plummeted below 50 per cent, confirmed the soundings and fears of Republican Senators and Representatives who have been trying to dissociate the party and themselves from Watergate.

The impact of the political conspiracy case upon the party's future was reportedly discussed at some length at the White House this morning, when Mr. Nixon met with party and Congressional campaign leaders.

4 G.O.P. Officials Present

The President met with George Bush, chairman of the Republican National Committee; Senator Bill Brock of Tennessee, chairman of the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee; Representative Robert H. Michel of Illinois, chairman of the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee, and David K. Wilson, chairman of the Republican National Finance Committee.

Ostensibly the meeting was one of a series to discuss party matters. But Senator Brock confirmed that the impact of the Watergate case had been one of the topics.

He said that "the positive response of the President and the party in day-to-day operations" had been specifically mentioned, presumably as one way of overcoming public doubts about the capacity of the Republicans to govern.

The Gallup organization reported that only 48 per cent of the 1,548 adults questioned April 27 to 30 in 300 representative communities said that they approved of the way Mr. Nixon was performing his duties as President. That was equivalent to Mr. Nixon's previous lowest rating in the poll, in June, 1971.

6-Point Drop in Month

The popularity rating represented a drop of 6 percentage points from early April, a significant decline, and a drop of 20 points from Mr. Nixon's highest level of approval, in January this year.

More significant, perhaps, for the immediate future were the findings, which the Gallup organization described as "ominous," that 31 per cent replied "yes" when asked "Does the Watergate affair make you less likely than before to vote for a Republican candidate in next year's Congressional elections, or not?"

According to the poll results, 13 per cent of those who identified themselves as Republi-

cans said that their attitude toward Republican candidates had been affected adversely by Watergate and 27 per cent of the independent voters agreed. As a minority party, the Republicans have depended on party solidarity and support among independents to win elections.

Mr. Bush said that he regarded the Gallup findings as "pretty positive results," in as much as they came at what he hoped would be "the height of attention to the matter."

He said that the poll had seemed to him to indicate that "the party goes on," and added: "It's not the party that gets damaged. The loser is the system, confidence in the system, which I'm not unconcerned about."

But while he said that there were enough "positive happenings" in the party around the country to persuade him that "the party is not going to get wiped out," other Republicans were less optimistic about the poll results.

Hopes Effect Will Recode

John T. Calkins, executive director of the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee, advised of the Gallup findings, said, that he was hopeful that "when some of the emotionalism and psychic shock recedes, people will begin reviewing Congressional candidates on their own merits."

But he said that, if the trend reflected in the poll continued, the committee would have to mount "an instructional and educational campaign" to underscore the point that party professionals had not been linked to the Watergate scandal.

Republican Senators and Representatives have been emphasizing since Watergate developments began multiplying last month that all the allegations of misdeeds have been directed at the committee for the Re-election of the President, which was separate from regular party organizations.

Senator Robert Dole of Kansas, who complained bitterly last year that he was unable, as Republican National Chairman, to influence the course of the President's campaign, seemed less unhappy about his distance from it today. Asked how he thought individual Republicans might turn the Gallup findings around, Mr. Dole said: "I know how I'm trying to turn that around—I'm going home every weekend."

Mr. Calkins offered the last word in Republican hopes. Referring to the scandal that rocked the Republican Administration of Warren G. Harding half a century ago, he said, "I hope there is a parallel to Teapot Dome, from our viewpoint, because the Republican party did pretty well in the next election."