

# Bush Seeking Quick Oblivion

By Lou Cannon

Washington Post Staff Writer

The Committee for the Re-election of the President is leading a shadow existence these days, and chairman George Bush of the Republican National Committee is trying to hurry it into oblivion.

"My own view is that as soon as the legal problems can be taken care of and the committee put to bed the better it will be for the Republican Party itself," Bush said.

Privately, Bush has complained that the high profile of the re-election committee is costing the party the support of major contributors around the country. This has put the Republican National Committee in the paradoxical position of cutting its staff by 25 per cent at the same time that the CRP boasts a \$4.8 million surplus

from the 1972 re-election campaign.

This combination of Republican cutback and CRP affluence continues to irritate GOP state chairmen. Typical of the complaints is the one voiced by William McLaughlin, chairman of the Michigan Republican Party:

"It's atrocious and inexcusable that the Republican Party has been placed in this position, I can't conceive of what they're doing at CRP. The longer they're in existence the more they detract from the Republican National Committee."

McLaughlin, whose own state party emerged from the 1972 election with a \$650,000 debt that since has been reduced to \$500,000, said Bush had no choice but to cut back the national committee staff under the circumstances.

Bush's dilemma is that he wants CRP's surplus \$4.8 million to be turned over to the national committee but doesn't want to make any move to obtain it until pending lawsuits arising from the Watergate burglary have been settled. If the money is transferred now, Bush points out, the national committee would become a defendant in the lawsuits.

Until the suits are resolved, Bush wants the CRP reduced to a caretaker structure that would exist as a legal entity for dealing with court cases and little more.

Meanwhile, the once-proud Committee for the Re-election—known far and wide to Republicans outside the committee by the acronym of "CREEP"—has been reduced to a nine-person

staff in two adjoining suites of offices on the second floor.

The nine people include Maurice H. Stans, chairman of the Finance Committee to Re-elect the President, and DeVan L. Shumway, the committee's principal spokesman and office manager.

Shumway says that in addition to "cooperating with appropriate investigative bodies and furnishing information from our files," the committee also maintains a running clip file. Shumway said he isn't sure who will make the determination to extinguish CRP but added that it "probably will be made primarily by our attorneys."

CRP's principal legal counsel, Shumway said, is the Washington law firm of Jackson, Laskey and Parkinson.

## of Re-Election Committee

One function performed by CRP is paying the legal expenses of "senior campaign officials" in connection with their testimony before the Senate Watergate committee and the civil suits against the committee. Shumway said that CRP had a legal opinion dating from "some months ago" that it could properly pay these expenses for officials who have not been charged with illegal acts.

Both Stans and John N. Mitchell, the former committee chairman, have been indicted in New York on charges of obstruction of justice and perjury. Both men are using their own money to pay legal expenses in that case, Shumway said, but will continue to have their expenses paid in cases where they have not been charged with crimes.

The committee's last quarterly report of June 10 showed that \$137,493 had been spent on legal fees. Expenditures in the present quarter are believed to be substantial because of the appearance of a number of CRP officials before the Senate committee.

According to Shumway, the decision to spend the legal fees was made by the CRP budget committee, of which Stans and Mitchell are the co-chairmen. Also on the seven-man committee is Jeb Stuart Magruder, former deputy director of CRP who testified before the Senate committee that he had knowledge of the Watergate bugging operation and committee perjury to help conceal it.

Other members of the committee which approved the legal expenses are Clark

MacGregor, who succeeded Mitchell as CRP chairman; Frederic V. Malek, deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget; Lee Nunn and Paul Barrick.

The founder of CRP is Francis L. Dale, publisher of the Cincinnati Enquirer, who Shumway says is still "technically the chairman." Dale says he doesn't consider himself the chairman and contends that "technically the CRP is no longer in existence."

Dale says the money sought by the Democratic Party in lawsuits against CRP is actually controlled by the finance committee. CRP has remained in being only because it "can't run away from the lawsuits," Dale said.

Asked his view of Watergate, Dale replied: "It's a sickening mess. The facts

should come out as quickly as possible and be put behind us as quickly as possible."

This is one view that is shared at the Republican National Committee, where preparations for next year's elections have been dampened by the fund drought.

In a letter preceding the staff cutback, Republican National Committee finance chairman David K. Wilson admitted to GOP donors that "the Republican Party is in trouble."

The deplorable Watergate scandal has "badly damaged our normal inflow of funds," Wilson said in the letter.

Both Bush and Wilson have pointed out that small contributions, those of \$100 or less, continue to pour into the committee in above-average volume.

But the big givers aren't giving.