

CRP

Republicans' Unwanted Child

Washington

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

"My own view is that as soon as the legal problem 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 CRP 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 CRP boasts a \$4.8 million surplus from the 1972 re-election campaign.

COMPLAINTS

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," he said. "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 said that Bush had no choice but to cut back the RNC 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 RNC would become a defendant in the lawsuits.

REDUCTION

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.

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.

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

What Wilson called "the deplorable Watergate scandal" has "badly damaged our normal inflow of funds," he 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.

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