



GEORGE BUSH
 Avoids the tapes

GOP mum here on Watergate

The Republican Party was trying to leave Watergate behind as it staged the last of three "New Majority Workshops" here yesterday.

The tapes hassle "doesn't exactly come under the heading of my business," said GOP National Chairman George Bush in an interview. His words were echoed in various ways by many of the 120 Republican leaders as they sought to disassociate their party from White House misdeeds.

The workshop was designed to produce strategies to build Republican voter strength among blacks, Chicanos and other ethnic groups.

The meeting room at the Hyatt Regency was not filled with the white, middle class faces of the Silent Majority; they were black, Chicano and Oriental faces, for the most part, representative of voting blocs Republicans think they must have if they are to win many 1974 congressional races.

Conceding the Republicans have "an image problem" because of Watergate, Bush said he believes other issues loom larger in the minds of Americans. He pointed to Republican victories this year in Maryland and Alaska congressional races and in the Virginia gubernatorial race.

In the workshop itself, the stress was on techniques for wooing minority voters; Watergate was hardly whispered.

"We have to be proud of the fact we're Republicans," said Assemblyman Paul Bannai (R-Gardena). "If we're not, we shouldn't say anything."

Bush and other Republicans embraced Nixon's achievements on other fronts, particularly on the "great issues:" war and peace, law and order, ending the draft.

"The party is clear," insisted Bush.

"The party is like a minor league farm club," suggested Santa Clara County Central Committee member Ted White. "When the big slugger retires, the farm team is always ready to send up a replacement."

Bush said he favored full disclosure by Nixon and said he thought it would "help both party and country."

The GOP chairman compared the resiliency of his party with 1966, when Republicans scored gains in Congress after the Goldwater presidential debacle two years before. "In 1974," he said, "the Republican Party has the opportunity to confound the pundits."

"People vote on gut issues," Bush said.