

Michigan—Round Two

A Democrat has carried the Eighth Congressional District of Michigan for the first time since 1932. Four years ago the Republican candidate won by 66 per cent; two years ago he won by 59 per cent. This week the party's choice, James M. Sparling Jr., went down to minus 49 per cent and defeat.

Add to this that the Republicans have now lost four special elections this spring—three of them in districts normally no source of party concern—against one politically meaningless victory. Add, further, that President Nixon himself went to the district to campaign for Mr. Sparling, that the vote turnout was unexpectedly large and that the Democrat, State Representative J. Bob Traxler, had made Watergate a major issue.

The net conclusion seems inescapable that the political tide against the President is approaching flood proportions.

Vice President Ford, who also campaigned for Mr. Sparling, is so discouraged by this spring's Republican setbacks (two in his native state) that he is conjuring up hobgoblins of "legislative dictatorship" resulting from "one-party control" of Congress. It is plain that Mr. Ford fears a Democratic landslide in November.

To the extent that such a landslide may be in the making, it will not be prevented by warning the electorate against the vague dangers the Vice President invokes. It will be prevented only to the degree that Republican candidates disavow the unsavory activities that have brought the Nixon Administration to its present pass.