

G.O.P. Is Silent on Nixon Leadership Bid As Burch Makes Appeal at Luncheon

By CHRISTOPHER LYDON
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WASHINGTON, April 26—

Republican leaders from around the country turned the silent treatment today on the latest White House effort to identify an embattled President Nixon with party candidates for office this year.

Dean Burch, the new counselor to the President, delivered the message to a Republican luncheon that Mr. Nixon's roles as President and party leader were "indistinguishable."

"Our hopes and our goals and our fortunes are as one," Mr. Burch said.

About 150 members of the Republican National Committee let this and most of Mr. Burch's other rhetorical appeals pass without a murmur or a clap.

Mr. Burch omitted from his delivery two of the more pointed statements in the White House text: First, that Mr. Nixon's record is one for Republicans "to grab hold of and to run on"; and second, that "our candidates can run as Nixon Republicans and they can win as Nixon Republicans."

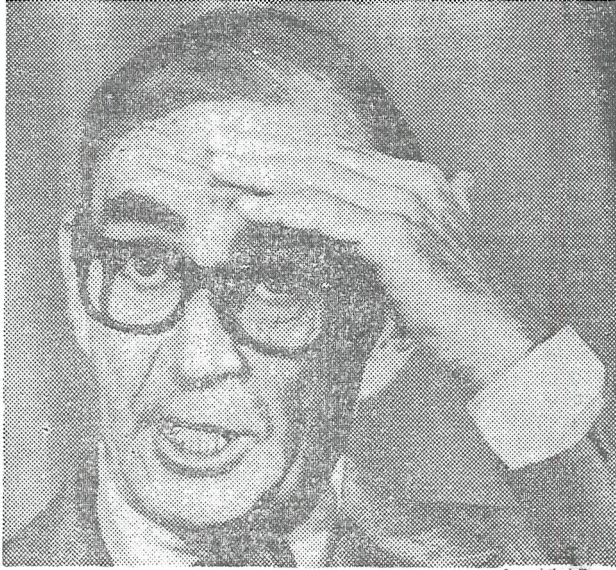
Fall Offensive Planned

George Bush, the Republican National Chairman, got a warmer reception this morning for his outline of a fall offensive—including national television ads—that would try to put the blame for "the low ebb of Congress" on the Democrats who control it. The most effective Republican issue, he suggested, may be the stated goal of many Democrats, inspired by Watergate and other Nixon Administration scandals, of winning two-thirds majorities in the House and Senate that could override most Presidential vetoes.

"Give this country a veto-proof Congress and fasten your seat belts," Mr. Bush warned. "The people must understand what disaster that would be for this country. We need more Republicans in office—not less."

But rallying around President Nixon would not be part of the Republican campaign as Mr. Bush explained it. For the first time in a difficult 15 months as Republican chairman, Mr. Bush said he was "plagued with doubts" about the responsibility for Watergate. He implied that even loyal Republicans could not now be sure of President Nixon's innocence until the White House releases more information.

"As to the President," said Mr. Bush, "I will not make final judgment on locked briefcases. I will not make final judgment on public opinion



Associated Press

Dean Burch, Presidential counselor, addressing the Republican National Committee at a luncheon yesterday in Washington. He forecast, "... Beginning early next week, that the end of Watergate will be in sight."

polls. I will make my final judgment based on hard evidence and facts. At this point, not professing to know all the details, I remain convinced that the President is telling the truth."

He continued: "I shall retain this belief not just because it is best for our country and best for our party. No man should be convicted on less than factual proof. No man should be hounded out of office on a charge unproved."

Dean Burch, who was chairman of the Republican National Committee during Senator Barry Goldwater's Presidential campaign in 1964, asked the party to "suspend judgment" on Mr. Nixon. Next week, he said, when the President responds to a subpoena from the House Judiciary Committee, issued in connection with the impeachment inquiry, "a massive body of evidence will supplant charges and allegations and innuendo."

Mr. Burch added, in the only line that won more than scattered applause, "I genuinely believe, beginning early next week, that the end of Watergate will be in sight."

Gap Has Widened

But the distance between the President and his party has grown noticeably since the defeat in Michigan 10 days ago of a Republican Congressional candidate for whom Mr. Nixon campaigned.

And for most of Mr. Burch's speech—for his attacks on the "liberal chic" news media, for his claim of a "nascent Republican majority" and even for

his reference to the end of the war in Vietnam—the response today was silence.

A small faction of the Republican National Committee clapped wistfully this afternoon when Mr. Burch said that President Nixon's "powers of regeneration and his skills of leadership are in superb working condition."

Vice President Ford told the committee late this afternoon that he, too, was worried about the estimate of Democratic gains this year of 50 to 100 seats in the House.

But Mr. Ford said it was not too late in many states for Republicans to recruit "hungry" candidates, to raise funds and to "stimulate the truth" in the campaign. Mr. Ford suggested that Republican candidates could run on "the good foreign policy of a great President, Richard Nixon" and "the progress we have made in the area of new federalism."