Sen. Dominick Tries To Ally With Nixon But Duck Watergate

...Some Others in GOP Facing Reection Also Attempt To 'Separate Out' Issue

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LITTLETON, Colo. — The Arapahoe County Bar Association was wallowing in Watergate.

"As attorneys, we are particularly sensitive to the presumption of innocence on the part of President Nixon," said Harvey Wallace, a Littleton lawyer. "Yet some of us who are defense lawyers, after we hear President Nixon's statements and determine the posture of his defense, can only conclude that his actions are more consistent with criminal culpability than with innocence."

I asked a visitor to comment on that. The visitor, Republican Sen. Dominick, knew exactly what to say. "If impeach- ing the President is the legal way out by the House, I'd have to sit as a juror, so I shouldn't express any personal opinions on this stuff," said Mr. Dubinick, adding that a popu- lar no-comment formula being used by a lot of senators these days.

But Sen. Dominick went on to say something more: "I have a fundamental belief that his policies as President have been per- fection. I don't think this misad- venturous sort of behavior, if you will, is an accurate reflection of him."

And that's the way the lanky, jocose Mr. Dominick is going to play it as long as he's contemplating a bid to get elected in November to a third term. If the House impeaches him, Nixon, the person who is being judged, the evidence, but Nixon the policymaker is right up Sen. Dominick's alley.

"It's going to be in my mind in kind the relative values of what the President has done by virtue of policy and separate this out from the Watergate situation," he told a group of Republican women recently.

The "Separate Out"Strategy

Perhaps a half-dozen other GOP Senators facing the voters this fall are in similar cir- cumstances. In varying ways, they are trying to separate Watergate from the conservative doctrines that they have long espoused. Mr. Nixon boosts revenue sharing, which has brought more political he looks, and that's the wrong way to look in a year like this.

An Democratic state chairman, Monte Paceo must stay out of the intraparty rival- ry of the six Senate candidates, but he also doesn't want to separate out new form of attack on Colorado Republicans just because Please Turn to Page 19, Column L1.

Contested From First Page of the President's problems. "A major part of the risk Watergate vulnerability is a kind of ar- rogance," he says. Also, he thinks that the Watergate connection will form a "guap that the Democrats can move into," he says.

Politics as Usual

The point is not so much whether Mr. Paceo is right or whether Sen. Dominick is indeed vulnerable but that this is the way politicians usually sound. And Sen. Dominick is doing what an incumbent seeking re- election usually does, commencing from Washington every weekend to fly himself around the state's mountains and plains to speak to any group that is available. GOP Sen. Gordon Allott got knocked off in 1972, he complained loudly last year about a lack of consultation and support for his margins. "I think he's been one hell of a Choir boy," said Mr. Nixon, adding that the Nixon Watergate connection will form a "no-win situation," Sen. Doininick says. "If you vote to convict him, you'll make some people so mad they won't even talk to your dog. If you vote not guilty, you'll get it from the other side."

With all the imponderables, it isn't possi- ble to tell whether traditional political points on the scoreboard will continue to de- termine this year's winners and losers. If they do, Sen. Dominick could be returned to Washington for six more years provided he is perceived as a canny spokesman for free markets and local decision-making, or he could be sunk as an arrogant politi- cian fronting for big business. But for Re- publicans, there is the alternative possibility that the Nixon Watergate connection will start looming bigger than anything else.

One of the Arapahoe County lawyers wondered whether the Democratic victories in this spring's special House elections per- tained to bad news for Republicans this fall. Mr. Dominick conceded that there was a drop- off in the GOP turnout. "I would be fooling myself and all of you if I didn't say I think this is going to have an adverse effect in No- vember," he said. "Hopefully it won't, but I do think it will as well as my chances of re-election are concerned."