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**Harry Dent Resigns
As Republican Counsel**

By Lou Cannon
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Former White House political aide Harry J. Dent, 43, under investigation for a minor violation of the federal Corrupt Practices Act, resigned yesterday as general counsel of the Republican National Committee.

Republican National Chairman Mary Louise Smith announced to a closed-door session of the party's executive committee that she had accepted the resignation of Dent, who is expected to plead guilty to a misdemeanor charge of aiding and abetting a violation of the act.

Dent, a South Carolinian who is widely regarded as a principal author of former President Nixon's "Southern Strategy," has been under investigation by the Watergate special prosecutor's office for his alleged role in distributing campaign funds from a secret White House fund in behalf of



HARRY J. DENT
... willing to go

a committee that failed to register as required by law.

The Republican Executive Committee also approved a far-ranging \$2 million program aimed at refurbishing

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the sagging image of the Republican Party. One of its central features is a television advertising campaign intended to attract voters to the GOP.

Approval of the program was tantamount to a vote of confidence for Mrs. Smith and for Eddie Mahe, executive director of the Republican National Committee, who proposed the plan.

However, Missouri Gov. Christopher S. Bond indicated reservations about the cost and timing of the program, and former National Chairman Ray Bliss said the success of the party will depend upon President Ford's performance, not upon any advertising campaign.

Mrs. Smith promised that the content of the advertising will be determined by the results of an in-depth survey on voter attitudes now being conducted by Detroit pollster Robert Teeter rather than on preconceptions.

"It's not going to be an artificial, phony advertising program," she said after the meeting. "It's going to tell the real story of the Republican Party and address and the concerns of the American people."

There was little illusion on the executive committee about the opinions now held by Americans about the GOP.

Responding to questions, Teeter said the GOP has long been considered "the party of the rich" and that it had also lost its reputation for integrity.

The bluntest statement about the present low repute of the party came from Dr. William Banowsky, the GOP national committeeman from California and president of Pepperdine College.

"It's not only that we're perceived as the party of the rich, white, middle-class," Banowsky was quoted as saying. "That's often what we actually are."

Banowsky also called to the attention of his fellow executive committee members the fact that the meeting was held behind closed doors. This has been a long-established practice of the executive committee, the policy-making body of the Republican National Committee.

Republican Party preoccupation with its "image" also played a part in the resignation of Dent, who had quietly conveyed to party officials his

willingness to step aside if his continued employment as general counsel became an embarrassment.

Dent had been presumed reluctant to resign lest it seem an admission that would damage his negotiations with the Watergate prosecutors. Mrs. Smith emphasized that acceptance of his resignation did not involve an admission of wrongdoing.

The investigation of Dent arose from a statement made last February by Herbert Kalmbach, President Nixon's former personal attorney, when Kalmbach pleaded guilty to federal campaign law violations.

Kalmbach said that he, Dent, former White House chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman and Jack A. Gleason, a GOP fund-raiser formerly on Dent's White House staff, ran the campaign fund distribution from a District of Columbia townhouse.

The "townhouse operation," as the government called it, reportedly was headed by Gleason and distributed about \$12 million to Republican House and Senate candidates. Dent's role reportedly was to determine the allocation of the campaign funds.