

POINT OF VIEW

GOP Bares Economic Plan

By MARY McGRORY
Star Staff Writer

Rep. Melvin R. Laird, chairman of the House Republican Conference, has unveiled the principal economic provision of the GOP "State of the Union" message, which the newly revived minority party plans to repeat—January.

He expounded at length on a federal-state tax-sharing plan which was originally pushed by Walter Heller, who served both the New Frontier and the Great Society as chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers.

Congressional Republicans are putting a major effort into their minority declaration this year. With 47 new House members and a brilliant array of new faces in the Senate, they hope their "State of the Union" which was somewhat facetiously received in 1966, will be taken seriously in 1967.

Laird told the press he thinks the real action in the coming year will be in the House, where the swelling of Republican ranks means that some of the legislative goals might actually be accomplished.

In drafting the "State of the Union," the views of the newly elected governors and legislators will be consulted, but Laird said he hoped the House Republicans "would not get involved in presidential politics."

He and House Minority Leader Gerald E. Ford already are involved to some extent, since they raised the money to finance the highly successful 30-state campaign tour of Richard M. Nixon.

They sought and received clearance from Ford's governor, George W. Romney, the leading contender. They said they were working not for the candidacy of Nixon but for the congressmen whom he was boosting.

The drafters of the "State of the Union" paper foresee little difficulty with the domestic proposals. The Republican governors went on record in July 1965 in favor of the tax-sharing scheme.

But if Senate Minority Leader Everett M. Dirksen

reserves for himself the right to speak again on foreign policy, as he did in 1965, the Republicans will find themselves in difficulties.

Dirksen pleased neither hawks nor doves of his party with his previous declaration. He will again fail the hard-liners like Nixon and Rep. Ford, who favor increased air and sea power use and the soft-liners, like Sen.-elect Charles H. Percy of Illinois and Sen.-elect Mark O. Hatfield of Oregon, who emphasize negotiation.

The Senate minority leader is a law unto himself, and none of the technicians in the House leadership can appeal to him to shape his views to theirs.

Dirksen's thinking on loyal

opposition were formed during the Eisenhower years, when the then Senate Minority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson took the position that partisan differences stopped at the water's edge.

The rule was observed, except in 1954 when Johnson, in concert with several other Democrats, took exception to the Eisenhower policies in Viet Nam.

Dirksen initially made a few noises about Viet Nam last year, but refused the language provided him by the Joint Minority Conference and went all the way with LBJ in his portion of the "State of the Union."

Romney is both vulnerable and defensive on foreign policy. He revealed in his first post-election national television appearance Sunday that he not only has no position but no views he dares express.

It is this weakness that may prove to be the opportunity of 48-year-old Sen.-elect Percy, who proposed the all-Asia peace conference, which he insists, despite the presidential trip to Manila, has never occurred.

Percy makes no secret to fellow Republicans of his feeling that he is far more informed on questions of war and peace than the governor of Michigan.

He has one other advantage over Romney. He supported his party's nominee in 1964 and Romney did not, a circumstance for which the Goldwater wing of the party has not yet forgiven him.

If Percy—no matter what Dirksen says in the "State of the Union" message—forges out a peace position, then it could mean problems, not only for Romney, but for President Johnson as well in 1968.