

McGovern Likens GOP to KKK

10/7/72
By William Greider

Washington Post Staff Writer

CHICAGO, Oct. 6—Sen. George McGovern escalated the rhetoric of his presidential campaign still further today, comparing the Republican opposition with the Ku Klux Klan and accusing the GOP of bribing militant minority leaders to hold down the vote among blacks and Mexican Americans.

Before a meeting of black ministers on Chicago's South Side, the Democratic nominee declared:

"You can stand against these men in business suits who are trying to trick black people out of their polling places, just as men in sheets and hoods once barred them with violence. You can stand against a form of political bribery that denies the right to vote as surely as Bull Connor (former Birmingham, Ala., police chief) did."

At the same meeting, McGovern described President Nixon's war policies as "murderous and barbaric." Lately, he has been calling the Nixon administration "the most corrupt in our history," a description he defended today.

At a press conference, when a reporter asked McGovern if he really believed the KKK comparison, the candidate replied:

"I really believe it. I think a Republican politician who would approach a black man or a Mexican American and say, in effect, we're going to bribe you to spread the word, it doesn't make any difference whether you register or vote, is just as immoral as a man who puts on a white sheet and tries to scare people out of voting."

However, McGovern would provide no details to substantiate his accusation. When newsmen complained, he said, "I have the direct word of people involved in those organizations that they were offered money by Republican political leaders. . . I'm not going to reveal the names of the people involved. As a matter of fact, they're fearful of reprisals from people in their own organizations."

When a reporter asked him



United Press International

George McGovern addresses a meeting of black ministers in Chicago, where he likened the GOP to the KKK.

how that charge was different from the smear charges by the late Sen. Joseph McCarthy, McGovern replied: "Well, the difference is that this is the truth. Joe McCarthy lied to us."

But McGovern said the threat of physical harm prevented him from revealing any evidence. "You'll just have to take it on my word that we have information from some of the people in those groups and we're convinced it's true," he said.

One of his black staff members, he added, has been "seriously threatened because of information he has brought to us."

Later, in response to reporters' questioning, the McGovern Illinois coordinator, Gene Pokorny, issued a statement with more details,

though it did not fully substantiate McGovern's accusation. It did identify the threatened staff member as Paul Cobb, national urban director for voter registration at the Democratic National Committee, who reported the incident to Chicago police.

"The people who threatened Mr. Cobb," according to Pokorny, "said that if they did not receive Democratic money they would accept money offered by the Republican campaign in order to hold down the black vote, as they had done in 1968."

As for Mexican Americans, Pokorny accused Jose Gutierrez, a Chicano leader in South Texas, of espousing neutrality in this election for the La Raza Unida Party in exchange for a \$1 million health clinic financed by federal aid in his

home town of Crystal City, Texas.

Pokorny attributed this information to Dr. Jorge Prieto, a Chicago doctor who was supposedly offered a job at the new health clinic by Gutierrez' wife. "She indicated that such funding had been made available because of an arrangement between La Raza Unida and Republican Party officials," the statement said. McGovern had said previously that Republican campaign funds were involved, not federal money.

While several hundred black ministers cheered his accusations with boisterous "Amens," McGovern also criticized President Nixon's Thursday press conference remarks. The Democratic candidate plucked two sentences out of context and accused Mr. Nixon of identifying amnesty and busing as the two major issues of this campaign.

McGovern then attacked Mr. Nixon for emphasizing two issues which affect less than 1 per cent of the population in order "to whip up the fear and to whip up the anxiety and to whip up the hatred of the American people."

"This is the sheerest kind of demagoguery," McGovern said, "for the President to take a few thousand men tortured in conscience and mind by the terriblest war in the history of our country and then to make them the scapegoat for his own murderous and barbaric policies that he's following in Southeast Asia."

As for busing, McGovern said his own position is the same as the Nixon appointees on the Supreme Court but, in any case, the busing issue will be settled by federal courts, not elected politicians.

"What we can do is bring some degree of sanity and truthfulness and decency to the discussion of that and other issues," he said.

Later, under questioning, McGovern acknowledged that Mr. Nixon had mentioned other issues besides busing and amnesty, but the Democratic candidate still criticized him for ignoring important concerns—the war, crime and drug addiction, education, health, unemployment and others.