

On the Move, but Running?

Gingrich's Busy Itinerary Feeds Speculation

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For a man who says he's not running for president, Newt Gingrich has got a heck of a busy week in store.

Yesterday the House speaker was in Chicago, drawing a standing ovation at the American Booksellers Association convention, where he was promoting the book of his to be published next month.

On Wednesday, Gingrich (R-Ga.) will be in Washington, speaking to a luncheon meeting of the Des Moines Chamber of Commerce—a group of

movers and shakers in the state with the first delegate-selection caucuses of 1996.

And on Friday, trailed by nearly 200 journalists in press buses and helicopters, Gingrich will begin a four-day sweep through New Hampshire, home of the first presidential primary.

What is the import of all this? Tony Blankley, the speaker's press secretary, laughed off the question. "You give the people what they want," he said.

Peter Hannaford, a public relations adviser for Ronald Reagan when Reagan was coyly sidling up to his run for

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Gingrich's Itinerary Rekindles Speculation On His Plans for '96

GINGRICH, From A1

the presidency, said yesterday he has not seen "a phenomenon" like Gingrich since his former boss. "There was excitement wherever Reagan went," Hannaford said, "and you see the same thing with Gingrich."

Hannaford and his former partner in the Reagan campaigns, Michael Deaver, both expressed skepticism that Gingrich is actually running. "You're seeing somebody who is enjoying himself," Deaver said.

Officially, Gingrich has declared himself too busy leading the Republican revolution in the House to think seriously of joining the presidential field. But again yesterday he declined to rule out the possibility.

"Why would I ever close the door prior to the book tour?" he said. The promotional tour for his forthcoming book, "Renewing American Civilization," is already scheduled to take him to 25 cities, and yesterday Gingrich said he might enlarge it.

He also disclosed that his royalties will go to a literacy foundation he helped create to encourage youngsters' reading habits. Gingrich agreed to forgo a \$4.5 million advance from HarperCollins Publishers for this and another book after a storm of criticism that sparked a House ethics committee inquiry.

Protesters, complaining about Republican budget cuts in social programs, briefly disrupted the start of Gingrich's speech in Chicago. But the Georgian received a standing ovation from the booksellers.

Wednesday's talk to 125 Iowans was arranged a month ago by Rep. Greg Ganske, the freshman Republican who represents Des Moines. "It just happened to work out on the speaker's schedule," a Ganske spokesman said.

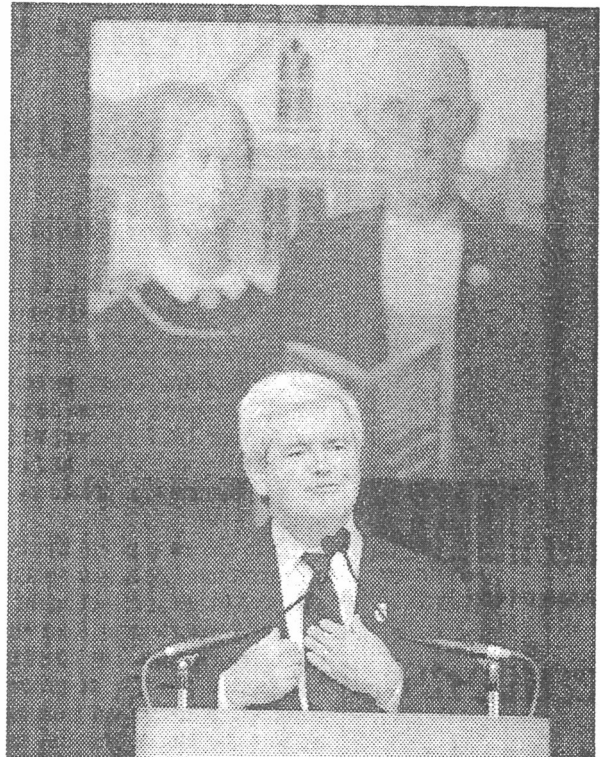
But all this is prelude to Gingrich's weekend trip to New Hampshire, which has turned into a media event of massive proportions.

For the 200 journalists who have signed up—more than usually travel with the president—the excursion has taken on the trappings of a state visit. There will be press buses and press helicopters, photo opportunities and "press availabilities," all coordinated by an official "Gingrich Trip Office" in Manchester. C-SPAN plans live coverage of several Gingrich events, as well as a speech by President Clinton at Dartmouth University.

"It is far and away the largest single campaign-style event we've had since 1992," said Carl Cameron, political reporter for Manchester's WMUR-TV. "Gingrich will overshadow everyone. He may even overshadow the president."

Why this saturation coverage for a noncandidate?

"He is the most riveting voice in the party right now," said Bruce Morton, a CNN political reporter who is making the trip. "Other candidates are responding to his agen-



BY BARRY JARVINEN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Newt Gingrich kicks off busy week with speech to American Booksellers Association in Chicago.

da, defining themselves in his terms. I don't think he'll run, but he's a font of ideas."

"Newt Gingrich is good copy," said Tim Russert, NBC's Washington bureau chief. "People want to see firsthand how he conducts himself, what kind of hints he gives, what kind of reaction he gets. He's almost a de facto prime minister. Clearly he's reveling in all the speculation."

"There's no better story," said Gloria Borger, an assistant managing editor at U.S. News & World Report. "He's the X factor."

Gingrich's packed schedule includes a standing-room-only speech to the Nashua Chamber of Commerce, a satellite talk to the New England Governors Association, a charity hoedown, a "moose watch," a Gingrich roast led by Rep. Sonny Bono (R-Calif.), an appearance on "This Week With David Brinkley," a meeting with top editors of the Manchester Union Leader, a taping at WMUR-TV and a visit to a local talk-radio show.

Gingrich, for his part, has been making light of the media stampede. "It's going to be hard to look for moose with all these moose in the press corps stomping along with me," he said over the weekend.

Blankley, Gingrich's spokesman, said he and the speaker were "totally unprepared" for this level of interest.

"Part of it is the silly season," Blankley said, referring to the summer news lull. "But when you have someone who is driving the ideas and the agenda at the national level, an ambiguous trip to New Hampshire takes on a certain internal logic."

Staff writer David Streitfeld contributed to this report from Chicago.