

A Vicious Smear Against Mr. Nixon



— Arthur Hoppe

Washington

REPORTS continued to circulate here today that President Richard M. Nixon was running for re-election.

The New York Times, in an exclusive story, said it had documented evidence that Presidential Appointments Secretary Dwight Chapin had hired an undercover agent to pass out Nixon buttons.

This followed by two days a report in the Washington Post that high White House officials were passing the hat among themselves to raise money for a billboard with Mr. Nixon's name on it.

Presidential Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler declined comment. "I don't intend to dignify any story based on hearsay and unidentified sources with any comment whatsoever," he said. "I will assert again, however, what I asserted the other day when I asserted that no one presently employed at the White House has been running the President for re-election. We don't condone or tolerate such political activity."

Asked if there had been a White House investigation of the press charges against Mr. Chapin, Mr. Ziegler said, "The President has full confidence in Mr. Chapin."

Asked why, if there had been no investigation, Mr. Ziegler said, "I don't intend to dignify any confidence based on hearsay and unidentified sources with any comment whatsoever."

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MEANWHILE, Newsweek magazine said flatly that Mr. Nixon was running for re-election.

It said he had actually held a campaign rally only three days ago in the Oval Room. It quoted an unidentified fire marshal as estimating the capacity crowd at 17 politicians inside with five more outside clamoring to be let in.

The magazine said Mr. Nixon entered

the oval office at 10:02 a.m. in a shower of golden confetti. It said one piece struck him in the left eye and, half-blinded, he stubbed his toe badly on the threshold.

The article said Mr. Nixon delivered a ringing, highly partisan address in which he praised Republicans, Democrats and independents alike. It quoted Mr. Nixon as saying he was considering actively campaigning once a month between now and election day and saying flatly that he was definitely running for President.

The rally concluded, Newsweek said, with Mr. Nixon extracting a pledge of secrecy from everyone present.

Asked about this bombshell, Mr. Ziegler said, "I don't intend to dignify any bombshells based on unidentified fire marshals with any comment whatsoever. I will assert, however, that no one presently employed by the White House has stubbed his toe. We don't condone or tolerate toe stubbing."

Mr. Ziegler added that Mr. Nixon had "full confidence" in Mr. Nixon.

At the same time, the Committee To Re-elect the President clung stubbornly to its position and declined to identify what President it intended to re-elect. Nor, when asked about its slogan "Four More Years!" would it say four more years of whom.

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THUS the press charges directly linking Mr. Nixon's name with a political campaign would, if proven, seriously damage him in the polls.

For the people this year are obviously sick and tired of politics and politicians — as witness their apathy over the grain deal, ITT and the Watergate affair.

The last man they're going to choose to run this great land of ours is the man who lets it be known that he actually wants the job.