

Mrs. Nixon, on Her Own, Begins Campaign Swing

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CHICAGO, Sept. 18 — Mrs. Richard M. Nixon began her first and longest political swing on her own for the 1972 Presidential campaign today by declaring: "I'm taking the White House to the people."

Mrs. Nixon's six-day schedule embraces seven states, three of them—Illinois, California and Texas—crucial in any race for the Presidency.

Her first stop today was Chicago, a city that has not been carried by a Republican Presidential candidate since Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956. This trip has been frankly billed as "political" and the Committee for the Re-election of the President is picking up the tab.

The First Lady handshook her way through a lunchtime crowd on the steamy sidewalks of Michigan Boulevard in front of a Nixon campaign headquarters. It is located across the street from the stanchly Republican Chicago Tribune.

Surrounded by a Phalanx of shoving policemen, Secret Service agents and television cameramen, Mrs. Nixon listened to a band render "Hail to the Chief" in a rock beat that made the tune that ushers in Presidents virtually unrecognizable.

Sees Volunteer, 99

Then she toured the campaign headquarters seven stories up in a skyscraper. There she talked with a 99-year-old volunteer, a wisp of a woman with a wisp of a voice, who danced at President William McKinley's second inaugural ball.

Downstairs again, the First Lady heard 12-year-old Teri Serletic sing "Mr. Nixon in '72 is the man for me and you."

At a news conference in her hotel this afternoon, Mrs. Nixon became flustered when asked whether she thought the Watergate bugging investigation would "hurt the President's chances."

She paused and then said tensely, "No, I don't. The polls haven't indicated that. They know he has no part of it."

A questioner asked: "When you and your husband discuss the election and the campaign, does the Watergate situation concern him?"

Mrs. Nixon answered: "We don't discuss it, because all I know is what I read in the paper. That's the only knowledge I have, so there's no reason to discuss it. I think it's been blown completely out of proportion. I think the chairman has answered all the questions on it."

It was believed she meant Clark MacGregor, chairman of the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

"Are you concerned about

what you read?" she was asked.

"No, I'm not," she replied.

Mrs. Nixon was asked what she thought about "the wife of a former Attorney General and a former Nixon campaign manager"—Martha Mitchell—being "manhandled" by a security agent, Steve King, who now heads the security contingent of the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

The President's wife replied, "I don't know anything about what happened in her [Mrs. Mitchell's] room."

She said she was against amnesty in the Vietnam war "because I think that those who ran [away] should not be accepted back at the moment."

"I do feel," she added, "that if they decided to serve, maybe in a volunteer capacity or something like that, and earn their way back into the country, that would be another thing. There might be something worked out like that."

She commented that she agreed with the recent remark of her daughter, Mrs. David Eisenhower, about being willing to die for South Vietnam.

"I would be willing to die to save freedom for 17 million people who are now having aggression against them with the idea of taking away their freedom and their country," she said.

Tonight Mrs. Nixon, Gov. Richard B. Ogilvie, a Republican, and Mrs. Ogilvie attended a tribute to 250 new Americans following naturalization ceremonies in the auditorium of the Prudential Building.

Tomorrow she flies West to Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, California, Texas and Oklahoma.