

G.O.P. Campaign Leader Charges 'Gutter Tactics'

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 6—Clark MacGregor, the President's campaign manager, took his turn today at defending the Nixon Administration against Senator George McGovern's charges of corruption.

"What will next week's slander be?" he asked, accusing the Democratic nominee of using libel, refutation, distortion and a variety of other "gutter tactics" in his bid for the Presidency.

Mr. MacGregor's remarks were the latest shots in a running dispute between the Republicans and the Democrats over the Senator's allegations that the Nixon White House is "the most corrupt in history."

Almost immediately, Mr. MacGregor's counterpart at McGovern headquarters here, Gary Hart, responded. "The record is there," he said. "They made the record and I don't think it's slander to point it out."

Their exchange came on a day when the Fair Campaign Practices Committee, a private group, disclosed here that more complaints of unethical political practices had been lodged this year "than at any time in recent history."

One More Complaint

Moreover, Mr. MacGregor, in his speech to the National Advisory Committee for the Election of the President, announced that another complaint would be added to that total: the contention by a group of Republican Congressmen that Senator McGovern's campaign has consistently abused or violated the Code of Fair Campaign Practices.

The intervention of the campaign-practices committee "may have some moderating effect on the McGovern-Shriver ticket in the days ahead," Mr. MacGregor said after telling the group that the Senator's campaign stood in contrast to the clean, decent and fair campaign that Mr. Nixon "is doing his best to conduct."

Allegations at Issue

Mr. MacGregor's remarks were generally consistent with the responses that other Republicans have offered to Mr. McGovern's charges.

Vice President Agnew, for instance, has repeatedly characterized the Senator's campaign as one in which smear and innuendo were primary ingredients, language that reappeared today in Mr. MacGregor's speech.

All the principals in the debate agree that at its core is a series of alleged scandals—the International Telephone and Telegraph controversy, the argument over whether excessive profits were made from the sale of American wheat to the Soviet Union, the Republicans' so-called "secret campaign fund," and the Watergate buggings incident.

The Watergate case prompted the first formal complaint of the campaign when Representative Jerome R. Waldie, a California Democrat, charged that the Republicans involved had "violated the level of political ethics."

According to Samuel J. Archibald, executive director of the Fair Campaign Practices Committee, the next two complaints came from Republicans—Senator Robert Dole and Mrs. Anne Armstrong, co-chairmen of the party's National Committee—who asserted that Senator McGovern had used unethical techniques in his rhetoric.

Those three complaints, added to 18 others filed over contests for the House of Representatives, result in a higher total at this point in the campaign than in any recent election year, Mr. Archibald said. At comparable dates, there were 10 complaints in 1966, 14 in 1968, and 15 in 1970, he said.

No Enforcement Power

His group, which was created by Congress in 1954 after a Senate inquiry into the tactics of the late Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, has no official authority to enforce the Code of Fair Campaign Practices, which is signed each election year by the chairmen of both parties.

It does seek to provide explanations from both parties to the news media and, in some instances, to arrange arbitration of the dispute.

"I sometimes think it's an exercise in futility," Mr. Archibald said in an interview today. "It's the same every year and about the only comfort I have is that, when it's all over, we find out by counting that dirty politics knows no party and the complaints are all even."

Mr. Archibald said he knew nothing of the complaint that Mr. MacGregor cited today, and a spokesman at Mr. MacGregor's office declined to name the Congressmen supposedly behind it.