

2 Segretti Aides Tell Of 'Tricks'

Washington

Two young men told the Senate Watergate committee yesterday of their efforts to disrupt the election campaigns of Democratic presidential candidates last year.

Both men, Martin Kelly and Robert Benz, said they had been hired for \$150-a-month, plus expenses, by Donald H. Segretti, and both admitted to having performed a series of "dirty tricks" against the Democrats, mostly in Florida.

They said they hired pickets, distributed fake campaign literature, planted stink bombs, wrote bogus letters and ordered large quantities of flowers and food in the name of a Democratic candidate with no intention of paying for it.

Kelly testified that he even hired a girl for \$20 to run naked in front of a hotel when Senator Edmund S. Muskie was staying, shouting, "I love Ed Muskie."

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The two men testified under a grant of immunity that prohibits prosecution against them based on their Senate testimony.

Kelly, 24, was the first witness to testify before a committee session which was not televised live — and the change in atmosphere was noticeable.

The hearing started 24

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minutes late with three of the senators absent. Although spectators still lined up outside the caucus room to wait for a chance to squeeze inside, half the seats at the press tables were empty. Both witness and senators appeared more relaxed.

Kelly said that he "felt guilty" for what he had done and told the committee, "any shame or abuse that is heaped on me is certainly

well deserved."

He gave expansive answers to the senators' questions, describing articulately and in a measured voice how he had worked "to get the candidates to start back-biting each other."

He started with small pranks, he testified, releasing white mice and a bird at a Muskie news conference, placing advertisements on radio stations that might alienate Cubans in Florida against Muskie and hiring persons to picket the candidates' rallies.

Kelly said that he hired the girl for \$20 because she was "hungry for money," and he said that he never really expected her to strip and parade naked in front of Muskie's hotel in Gainesville, Fla.

Kelly said that gradually his activities became "more intense. I was weaving my own spider web, and I could not get out of it. I kept getting in deeper and deeper," he said.

"Almost the complete purpose" of his efforts, he said, was not to influence voters directly but to "have the candidates get upset and maybe do something back to the other candidates."

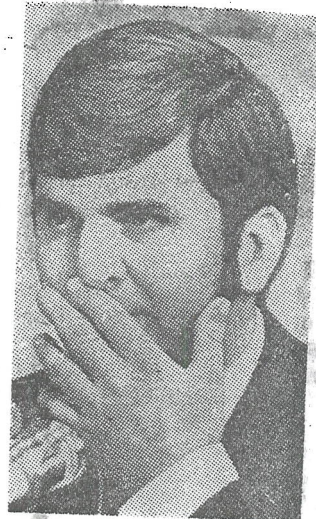
Senator Edward J. Gurney (Rep.-Fla.) tried to excuse some of Kelly's actions. He called most of the pranks "rinky-dink," said that all politicians expect to have tricks played on them and added, "I loathe it, but it is part of politics."

But Kelly continued to apologize. "I'm not here to defend my position. I don't have a position to defend."

Benz, 25, was every bit as combative as Kelly was remorseful. He volunteered no information, and answered most questions in clipped monosyllables.

Gradually, Benz became slightly more expansive in his answers. He told how he had worked in the unsuccessful 1970 Senate campaign of former Representative William C. Cramer, a Republican, and how a number of unspecified tricks had been played on him. Some of the same Democrats who worked against Cramer, he said, were working for Democratic candidates in the 1972 presidential primary in Florida.

He agreed to work for Segretti, Benz said, because he



UPI Telephoto

MARTIN KELLY
A nude for a prank

"thought it was an opportunity to give these people a little bit of the medicine they had given me."

He said that he knew it was illegal for him to instruct an accomplice to send a letter accusing Senators Hubert H. Humphrey and Henry M. Jackson of sexual misconduct, and he declared that he felt badly because the accomplice, George Hearing, was now in jail, having pleaded guilty to distributing false campaign material.

But he said that he "felt like I did what I should do," and he added that he thought his tricks might prevent Democrats from acting in like fashion in future campaigns.

"If my actions in any way would have cleaned up politics, they would have contributed something," he declared.

When Benz asserted that law enforcement authorities had failed to investigate alleged Democratic misdeeds, Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr. (Rep.-Conn.) elicited testimony from him that he had never told authorities about it.

Weicker said Benz "could have gone the legal route" and that his charges therefore "really don't form a valid basis for your activities in 1972."

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