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McGOVERN ASSAILS 'PRANKS' DEFENSE

Says Administration Can't
'Brush Away' Alleged
Sabotage as 'Capers'

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FORT WORTH, Oct. 17—
Senator George McGovern declared here today that the Nixon Administration could not "brush away" the invasion of Democratic National Committee headquarters last June and alleged political sabotage against the party as "pranks" and "capers."

Speaking at a downtown noon rally before about 5,000 people under a hot sun that sent the temperature to an unseasonal 88 degrees, the Democratic Presidential nominee said that he did not "enjoy that part of campaigning which comes from attacking the opposition."

"I'd much rather talk about the programs and the principles that I believe in," Mr. McGovern went on, "but I think there are certain dangerous trends that have been set in motion by this present Administration that we must talk about, because they jeopardize the freedom and the constitutional rights on which our freedom and our system of justice depends."

He then began an attack on remarks made on the American Broadcasting Company's "Issues and Answers" program on Sunday by John D. Ehrlichman, assistant to the President for domestic affairs.

'Astonishing and Alarming'

"The statement on Sunday by Mr. Nixon's top White House adviser, Mr. John Ehrlichman, is an astonishing and alarming statement," Mr. McGovern said.

"Now this is what it says," he added. "He said that hiring a network of more than 50 political operatives to forge letters, to impersonate officials of various Democratic campaigns, to incite political riots at our political rallies, to issue phony press releases in the names of others—in this case in the name of Democratic campaigners—to withhold evidence from a grand jury, to illegally enter the offices of the opposition party, to steal private files and to unlawfully wiretap the private conversations of Democratic officials—he said all of these things are just political pranks that we've

always had in America."

As the partisan crowd expressed its support with loud boos, he continued:

"I will say to Mr. Ehrlichman and to his boss, Mr. Nixon, that they cannot brush away crimes of that kind by calling them pranks or calling them capers."

Recalls Former Posts

"Remember this, political agents, and two of the men caught inside the Democratic national headquarters with their burglar tools with their rubber gloves on, with their wiretapping equipment, two of those seven men were former officials of the White House. All of them apparently were financed out of campaign funds deposited in the bank accounts of one of these men."

Senator McGovern said that he thought it was "impossible to overstate" the threat "to our freedom raised by sabotage activities of this kind."

"When voters are denied the opportunity to make a thoughtful, informed judgment, without having it poisoned by sabotage and misleading propaganda and tricks of this kind," he added, "then we are denied what is the right to make a thoughtful informed judgment on the men and women who are going to represent us in the halls of government."

The Fort Worth appearance concluded a campaign swing through Texas that spanned two days and bolstered Mr. McGovern's hopes in his quest for the state's 26 electoral votes.

Remarking on the size and enthusiasm of rallies last night in Houston and San Antonio, the nominee told his audience here:

"I'm convinced that we're going to carry the state of Texas on Nov. 7."

Most of his top advisers, both in the state and on the

national staff, are somewhat less optimistic. However, many of them profess to see a chance, at least, that Texas will fall in the Democratic column as it did narrowly for Hubert H. Humphrey in 1968.

Speaking in Austin yesterday before a joint session of the state Legislature, in which 29 of the 31 Senators and 140 of 150 Representatives are Democrats, Mr. McGovern was accorded what most observers ad-

judged a reasonably warm welcome.

"I've been around state government 22 years and I've never seen this kind of enthusiasm," Gov. Preston Smith, a lame duck, said after the session. "He's really closed the gap here. As of today, it's a tossup."

"A tossup?" he was asked by a newsman.

"Pretty close," Mr. Smith amended.

Just before leaving Fort Worth today, Senator McGovern met at the airport with about a dozen "leading conservative Democrats," according to Richard Dougherty, his press secretary.

"He did some evangelical work," Mr. Dougherty added. "He didn't ask for public commitments and they don't want any names used at this point."

Other McGovern aides said some prominent friends of former Gov. John B. Connally, who was Secretary of the Treasury under President Nixon and now heads Democrats for Nion, werxe there.

They also reported some discussion at the meeting of a poll said to have been commissioned by Dolph Briscoe, the Democratic gubernatorial candidate, that reputedly showed Senator McGovern and President tied at 42 per cent in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. However, they gave no details on the size of the poll or how it was conducted.

Despite the McGovern organization's talk of rising support in Texas and the nominee's efforts to woo moderate and conservative Democrats, neither Mr. Briscoe nor Barefoot Sanders, the party Senatorial nominee, appeared at any public events with him.