

Inside Report

Reagan Note Shakes Nixon

By Rowland Evans
and Robert Novak

WASHINGTON — A private letter written last summer by Gov. Reagan of California to reassure conservatives about the new China policy is now being used to further undermine President Nixon's shaky standing on the right.

Reagan's personal letter of Aug. 24, obviously backed and perhaps inspired by the White House, informed conservatives that Nixon's trip to China did not endanger the Nationalist Chinese regime on Taiwan or its seat in the United Nations. That ill-starred prophecy today provides ammunition for Rep. John Ashbrook of Ohio, Nixon's conservative challenger in Republican primaries, to assault the President's credibility.

Guaranteed Seat

"We have pretty well guaranteed the continuation of Taiwan in the United Nations," wrote Reagan, describing Nixon's efforts to save the Nationalists' seat. "At the same time, we are pretty sure the Red Chinese will not accept a seat under those terms . . . I hope you will be able to give the President your unqualified support."

Campaigning against the President, Ashbrook raises this point: If White House reassurances proved worthless last autumn when the UN voted to expel Taiwan and seat the Peking regime, what good are Presidential guarantees today?

In effect, then, the Reagan letter's hollow note six months later undercuts the Administration's present claim that Nixon made no real concessions on Taiwan during the Peking talks.

Ashbrook's arguments will not expand his vote significantly in Tuesday's New Hampshire balloting or subsequent primaries. But the White House fears the right-wing assault on the

China policy might lose Nixon valuable campaign workers and financing, supplied in disproportionate numbers by the party's right wing, for his re-election campaign.

On the Democratic side, Sen. Edmund Muskie faces a brewing revolt protesting