

Hickel Hints He Can't Back a Divisive

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Walter J. Hickel, who was dismissed last month as Secretary of the Interior, strongly implied today that he would not campaign for President Nixon in 1972 if the Republican "attitude" was the same as in this year's Congressional elections.

In his first public appearance since he left office, on the Columbia Broadcasting System's "Face the Nation" program, Mr. Hickel was asked whether he would campaign for the President again as he had done in 1968.

Mr. Hickel never answered the question directly, but he said, "I cannot be convinced that the '70 campaign was really a success."

"It was the attitude that bothered me," the former Gov-

ernor of Alaska went on. "I don't think you go out and divide."

Mr. Hickel indicated, however, that he had not lost his admiration for Mr. Nixon and would work for him in 1972 if the President's campaign were based on the themes of his inaugural address.

"That was my Bible," Mr. Hickel said of the President's address, in which Mr. Nixon talked about the destiny of America and pledged to bring together the divergent elements of the country.

"I could campaign with that kind of a campaign," Mr. Hickel said.

The former Interior Secretary did not criticize Mr. Nixon directly, but, speaking of Vice President Agnew, he said:

"Vice President Agnew did a great job in raising money

for the Republican party, and there's nothing wrong with that. That has to be done. But when you come to divide and set policy that way, I inwardly won't agree. So if they had the kind of a campaign in 1972 that we ended up with the last few weeks of [1970], I would be very sad, and I wouldn't like that."

Mr. Hickel said that he did not know why he was "fired" and that Mr. Nixon had told him only that there was "a lack of mutual confidence." He said the President "seemed to be happy with [the] kind of approach that I was using" toward problems "related to the environment and pollution."

Mr. Hickel said the "purge at Interior," in which six officials were asked to resign two days after he was dismissed, was wrong.

'72 Campaign by G.O.P.

"How anyone could come in an Administration and just, in one hour, say, 'Clean up your desk' and literally purge six men, and two Presidential appointees, was beyond my comprehension," Mr. Hickel said.

In a related matter, the Interior Department announced today the final adoption of reg-

ulations that would prohibit billboards and similar commercial displays on public land, including the area around interstate highways.

Mr. Hickel issued the regulations a few months before he left office, but it was reported after his dismissal that they would be rescinded.