

Laird Leads the Critics

McGovern Peace Plan Hit

Washington

Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird charged Senator George McGovern yesterday with advocating a policy of "unconditional surrender" in Vietnam.

Never before, he asserted, has a candidate for President urged such a policy on the nation.

In a Pentagon news conference ostensibly called to discuss defense budget plans, Laird appeared primed and anxious to respond to reporters' questions on McGovern's major Vietnam speech of Tuesday night.

Acceding to the demands of North Vietnam and the Viet Cong guerrillas without any concessions by the other side, the defense secretary declared, would "assure failure" of a range of other negotiations over such things as limiting strategic weapons, reducing forces in Western and Eastern Europe and reducing the threat of conflict in the Middle East.

CRITICS

Laird was but one of a number of Republicans and labor leaders who rushed to criticize the Democratic presidential nominee's blueprint for ending American involvement in the war in Indochina.

The South Dakota Democrat pledged, if elected, to stop the bombing, end the flow of military supplies to Saigon, withdraw within 90 days the remaining American military men in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and, following the hoped-for return of American war prisoners, withdraw United States bombers from Thailand and warships from the waters off Vietnam.

Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, the Senate Republican leader, said he was "shocked at his callous interference in the destiny of the people of South Vietnam by suggesting their disarmament and leaving our allies helpless before an advancing enemy."

DOLE

Senator Robert Dole of Kansas, the republican National Committee chairman, labeled the McGovern statement inappropriate, irresponsible and hypocritical. House Republican leader



AP Wirephoto

Caroline

Caroline Kennedy appeared at a McGovern-for-President fund-raising affair last night in Boston with her aunt, Joan Kennedy. It was Caroline's first political appearance in Boston.

Gerald Ford criticized the plan as "simply a formula for a Communist takeover in Saigon. George McGovern is unreal."

George Meany, president of the AFL-CIO, who has refused to endorse any presidential candidate, said of the McGovern proposal: "Instead of emphasizing Hanoi's responsibility for continuing the bloodshed, the opponents of our country's policy do nothing but blame the United States."

NIXON

Senate Democratic leader Mike Mansfield of Montana took a seemingly neutral position on the speech. "Whether we in the Senate agree or disagree it is not a Senate affair," he said. "It will be up to the American people to make a judgment on November 7."

The White House declined to comment on the speech,

but announced that President Nixon was considering a nationwide radio broadcast this weekend. The subject was not announced and a spokesman said it was not certain that the talk would be made.

Senator William Fulbright gave his "general support" to McGovern's plan to end the war, but suggested the Democratic presidential nominee was too detailed in his presentation.

The Arkansas Democrat and longtime opponent of the war said many of the specifics, particularly the pledge to end immediately all military shipments to South Vietnam, should be left to negotiations.

But "McGovern was under great pressure to give details," Fulbright told a news conference, "and I sympathize with that." However, he went on, there is no way any government can make

total commitments in advance since it can't be sure of the other side's response.

Fulbright was joined by two other leading Democratic critics of President Nixon's Vietnam policies, Senators Frank Church of Idaho and Alan Cranston of California.

Church also expressed some misgivings about not leaving the matter of aid shipments to the negotiations, but he and Cranston gave otherwise total endorsements of McGovern's plan.

Cranston added that "I don't believe" presidential adviser Henry Kissinger will deliver a negotiated settlement in Paris before the November 7 election, "but if he does, we must ask ourselves three hard questions:

"First, is the combat really over, and are all the POWs really back home?"

"Second, why does this sudden peace initiative occur on election eve?"

"Third, are the terms any different from those we could have negotiated four years ago? If he wants a negotiated settlement so badly, why did Richard Nixon let 20,000 young Americans die first?"

At one point Cranston suggested as a possible answer that "President Nixon seems to think the nation's manhood, and perhaps his own" is threatened by an immediate end to U.S. involvement in the war.

When asked to explain the remark, Cranston said it was not the kind of statement that can be backed up by precise evidence.

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