

President Said Afraid of War's 'Awful Truth'

Nixon Hindering POWs, McGovern

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Sen. George McGovern accused the Nixon administration today of interfering with the return of three American prisoners freed by Hanoi, saying President Nixon is afraid the men "will tell the awful truth about the war."

The Democratic presidential nominee said the truth is that American bombing keeps the prisoners in their cells.

McGovern escalated his POW dispute with the administration as he campaigned in California, joined by Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey, a rival-turned-ally.

HE SAID he hopes his appearances with Humphrey will demonstrate that despite differences on some issues, "both of us want to beat Nixon."

McGovern forces also hope the teamwork will help California Democrats forget the bitterness of the McGovern-Humphrey presidential-primary campaign.

They look also for an assist from Humphrey in reclaiming the labor vote, and McGovern said he expects that 90 per cent of it will be in his column on election day.

Humphrey told his supporters in and out of organized labor: "You're not Humphrey supporters, you're Democrats, you go on out and work for George McGovern."

M'GOVERN dealt with the prisoner issue in a statement prepared for a meeting of Northern California labor supporters, saying the administration denied a request of the three American fliers that Nixon "not impede their release."

The freed prisoners, Air Force Maj. Edward Elias, Navy Lt. Markham Gartley and Navy Lt. (j.g.) Norris A. Charles, arrived in Peking from Hanoi today, en route to the United States.

"We thank God that the men have been released, despite the administration's interference," McGovern said.

"In the last several days, we have seen that the Nixon administration is ... more concerned about the opinions those men might express than it is about speeding their release," McGovern said. "I believe the President is afraid these prisoners will tell the awful truth about the war—that it is the bombing that keeps them in prison."

M'GOVERN'S dispute with the administration centers on whether the men are to be returned to military jurisdiction immediately. He said that they asked a chance to choose civilian medical care and sought 30 days leave.

"The prisoners who were freed by Hanoi last week sent cables to President Nixon ask-

ing that he not impede their release ..." McGovern said. "Most of all, they wanted to come home without official harassment by the administration ..."

"For four years, the Nixon administration has done nothing for the prisoners but add to their numbers," McGovern said. "I say Mr. Nixon should at least exercise some common sense and common decency when they are released through the efforts of others."

An American peace group that went to Hanoi for the release is escorting the prisoners home.

THE CASE of the three POWs became a campaign issue Sunday when McGovern accused the administration of playing politics with their release.

Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird retorted that McGovern was making himself "a spokesman for the enemy" and called that a despicable act.

McGovern said Monday that although the statement was in Laird's name, "that's obviously Nixon speaking ..."

"He's going to try to sit there on top of his Gallup poll for the rest of the campaign and let other people do his dirty work for him," McGovern said in Seattle.

M'GOVERN said "one thing that galls me" about the Nixon plan of using campaign

stand-ins is that they are getting equal time in network-television coverage.

"I don't think the President ought to be allowed to sit there in the White House and have these lackeys of his running around the country getting equal time with me every day," McGovern said.

He said that is happening because "the Nixon-Agnew intimidation of the networks has worked ..."

McGovern campaigned Monday in Billing, Mont., in Tacoma and Seattle, Wash., and in San Francisco.

Charges