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Watergate Queries

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Media 'Irritate' Reagan

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Governor Ronald Reagan charged yesterday that the Watergate bugging incident has been "blown out of proportion" by news media and U.S. Senate investigators. Chron. 324-B

And he displayed marked irritation that the State Capitol press corps keeps asking him questions about the Republican break-in of Democratic headquarters in Washington during last year's presidential campaign.

As reporters kept returning to the Watergate issue at yesterday's press conference, Reagan's voice rose. He complained that "in your efforts to keep this thing (going), you go at anyone, hoping that someone will

say something that can be used as a lead line.

"I told you I only know what I read in your papers, and I hope you are all scrupulously accurate," he said, with sarcasm in his voice but a smile on his face.

He then was asked by a newsman: "What irritates you most" about repeated quizzing about Watergate?" Reagan closed out the subject this way:

"Well, I'm irritated at a fly that keeps buzzing around my head and won't go away. You've been doing this for weeks, and I have nothing new to offer."

Immediately after his regular news conference, Reagan informally told a group of visiting journalism students from Stanford University that Sacramento newsmen are always "looking for excuses" to bring up the

Watergate scandal, and "they just keep on and on and on" asking "picayunish" questions.

But at the outset of the press conference, the Republican governor, regarded as a possible candidate for President in 1966, bemoaned the fact that the American people have become "cynical" about political wrongdoing — and even suggested a cure: appointment of a bi-partisan commission to research such recurring problems over the nation's history and propose solutions.

However, Reagan did say he felt that Watergate has been "blown out of proportion" in comparison with past political scandals. He laid the blame for this on news media and the special, Democratic-controlled U.S. Senate committee currently investigating the affair.