

# Watergate-- 'Low Point In Tactics'

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Washington

The Fair Campaign Practices Committee yesterday called the Watergate affair the low point in campaign tactics since the committee began monitoring campaign activities nearly 20 years ago.

The committee said it "has uncovered no campaign tactics comparable in extent or in potential damage to a free, self-governing society" in its existence.

"The sordid scandal called the Watergate affair is not simply more of the same tactics which have made 'politics' a dirty word," the report of the private, non-partisan group said.

"It is a conscious conspiracy to violate laws, to manipulate voters, and to make a mockery of the democratic system of self-government."

## TACTICS

The report disagreed with President Nixon, who has said that the Watergate scandal was "only the latest example of the kind of shady tactics that politicians on all sides have been using more and more in recent years."

"Theft, spying, sabotage and subversion are not the tactics of the political professions," the committee said.

While the group accepted a "simple unsophisticated form of spying" as a traditional part of campaigning, it condemned such unethical and illegal activities as electronic surveillance, falsification of letters and advertisements, illegal financial reporting and the weighting of opinion polls.

## WARNING

The report said that a warning by committee chairman Charles P. Taft of

Cincinnati that 1972 campaigning would be the dirtiest in recent years proved to be true.

It said the committee receives an average of 67 annual complaints but in 1972 there were 80.

Taft gave two possible reasons for the increase.

"First, this appears to be the year (1972) of the Great Stamp Robbery . . . the committee has received more complaints about

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members of Congress abusing their free mailing privilege than we received throughout the entire campaign period in previous years.

"Second, this appears to be a negative year, with many candidates attacking their opponents' positions instead of taking a positive stand on the issues. A negative attack in a close race most often results in dirty politics," he said.

## COMPLAINTS

In addition, the report said the Federal Communications Commission reported that one week before 1972 election day it had received more than ten times the number of complaints about violation of requirements for equal time in political coverage and for fairness in reporting controversial issues than had been received during the comparable period in 1968.

"The increase in complaints about campaign violations seems surprising in a year when pollsters and pundits were reporting voter apathy, but that apathy may be part of the reason for the political sewage of 1972. When the public is apathetic, some candidates become shrill trying to get the voter's attention," the report said.

"Even if the polls indicate the candidate is sure to win, his campaign apparatus may mount an all-out drive to get the attention of the unconcerned voters and guarantee a landslide victory," the report said.

## DANGERS

Senator Stuart Symington

(Dem-Mo.), appearing on CBS' "Face the Nation," predicted that the Senate Watergate investigations will "show the people the dangers of secrecy, as well as the dangers of trying to blanket everything with the two words—national security."

Robert S. Strauss, the Democratic National Chairman, also disputed Mr. Nixon's

recent statement that the various Watergate investigations might harm the nation's security.

"I have noticed in the last two or three days and since the President's statement, the cover that he has attempted to wrap himself in of national security," Strauss said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

"The question that comes back to my mind is, are we talking about national security or are we talking about Nixon security?" he asked.

Asked if he was suggesting that the President was trying to justify at least a partial coverup of Watergate on the pretext of national security, Strauss said, "Yes, I am saying that. That is exactly what I am saying."