



By Joe Heiberger—The Washington Post

Senate Watergate committee lawyer Mark Larkritz uses chart to show how money was spent on "dirty tricks."

Anti-Muskie 'Tricks' Related

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By Lawrence Meyer

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The manager of Sen. Edmund S. Muskie's 1972 Presidential campaign testified yesterday that a program of sabotage and espionage by agents of the Nixon re-election effort forced Muskie to divert resources, change schedules, alter strategy and assume a defensive posture.

"I don't want to say we lost because of all these incidents," Berl Bernhard told the Senate select Watergate committee, "I think they were exacerbating problems."

Earlier testimony from paid agents of the Nixon re-election campaign established that their prime objective was to confuse the Democratic presidential candidates and to cause divisions that would make it difficult for them to unite behind their 1972 nominee.

Based on what the committee heard yesterday from Bernhard, former manager of Muskie's campaign, the effort to confuse and divide the Democrats succeeded.

Dirty tricks and leaks of inside information, much of it apparently by Nixon committee spies, made it more difficult for Muskie to raise money—the most

pressing problem of his campaign from the outset—Bernhard told the committee.

In addition, the dirty tricks created suspicion within the staff to the point where members were told "only what was indispensable for their function," Bernhard said. "There is no question that as a result of these constant leaks of information . . . we began to run something in the nature of maybe a police state for a while" within the Muskie campaign, Bernhard said.

Muskie's early campaign was designed around the theory that he was at his best answering questions, even from unfriendly audiences, to demonstrate that he could remain "cool" under stress, Bernhard said.

After several appearances during which the staff detected a pattern of hostile questioning centering on four subjects—abortion, amnesty, marijuana and gay liberation—the strategy was changed, Bernhard told the committee. The questions, he said, "seemed to be planted" and usually came from persons who had an ability to drown out other questions. Earlier testimony from Nixon committee agents revealed that they

had planted hostile questioners at Muskie rallies.

Muskie changed his approach, Bernhard said, because he was not being given an opportunity to present his views on the issues. "It was impossible because we heard the same questions, people were not asking about defense spending and they were not asking about Vietnam, and they were not asking about problems of the responsiveness or unresponsiveness of government. What they were doing was raising these same four questions time and time again."

Bernhard said that he and others on the Muskie staff assumed that the questions were planted by the campaign staff of Sen. George S. McGovern (D-S.D.): "It did not generate a warm feeling toward Sen. McGovern or his staff," by the Muskie staff, Bernhard said.

Although Bernhard said it was difficult to analyze precisely what the effect of the dirty tricks was on Muskie's failure to win the nomination, he attributed part of Muskie's inability to win a majority of the vote in New Hampshire primary to dirty tricks played on Muskie in Manchester, the state's largest city. In addition, Bern-

hard said dirty tricks in Florida undermined Muskie's attempts to woo supporters away from Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.).

Besides costing Muskie the support of potential backers, fraudulent advertising in Florida forced the Muskie campaign to divert its scarce money to answer attacks on Muskie that had appeared throughout the state, Bernhard said.

Early in the campaign, as far back as the summer of 1971, Bernhard said, a basic schedule for the Muskie campaign, reflecting its strategy, was stolen from a staff member. As a result, adjustments had to be made in strategy and scheduling, Bernhard said.

Bernhard's firmest recommendation to the committee was that it draft legislation to change the method of campaign financing. "America deserves candidates who have enough time to consider the issues, enough funds to present their views to the voters and to compete equally on the merits—not men who make the best fund-raisers, because they appeal to particular interest groups, or because they are in a position to put pressure on people with money," Bernhard said.