

NYTimes APR 1 1 1974
**NIXON CAMPAIGNS
 IN RURAL MICHIGAN**

**Stumps for Candidate for
 House in Special Election
 —7,500 at Airport**

By R. W. APPLE Jr.
 Special to The New York Times

SANDUSKY, Mich., April 10 —President Nixon campaigned today for a Republican Congressional candidate—and for himself—in the small crossroads towns of rural Michigan. The President identified himself firmly with the candidate, James M. Sparling Jr., in the special election next Tuesday here in Michigan's Eighth Congressional District.

First, at the airport near Saginaw, then, in a 53-mile motorcade through the rich but still brown flatlands of the Thumb region, Mr. Nixon praised Mr. Sparling and said he needed him in Washington.

Mr. Sparling, whose campaign has been bedeviled by the scandals in the Administration, said originally that he had invited the President here not to bolster his own effort but to speak out on Watergate

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and other problems. A Sparling aide confided this morning that he would be happy if the President never mentioned the local candidate's name.

Mr. Nixon never mentioned Watergate, and he mentioned Mr. Sparling constantly.

It was almost as if the President, in a complete reversal of the usual pattern, hoped that he would be able to gain strength from Mr. Sparling's obvious popularity.

Most of the leaders of the Michigan Republican party, which was deeply divided about the wisdom of Mr. Nixon's trip here, turned out to welcome Mr. Nixon at the airport. But neither Gov. William G. Milliken, who said that he had a previous engagement in Canada, nor Sen. Robert P. Griffin joined in the three-hour motorcade.

Republican Area

If nothing else, Mr. Nixon demonstrated once again the drawing power of the Presidency. More than 7,500 people greeted him at the airport, and in the Thumb—so-called because of its shape on the map—Mr. Nixon drew crowds of

2,000 or more in Bad Axe, Cass City and Sandusky, none of which has more than 3,000 inhabitants.

The amateur sign-painters in those towns and in the hamlets, set among the fields where navy beans and wheat will soon be planted, had themselves a picnic. The area is overwhelmingly Republican, but a sizable minority of the placards were unfriendly.

Some samples: "Put Our Dads Back To Work," "Abdicate Wit Honr," "Thumbs Down on Nixon," "Stick With Dick," "Peace Be With You, Mr. President," "Forget Watergate."

Despite the presence of bands and banners, the crowds seemed more curious than enthusiastic, and the President's brief speeches lacked fire. In

part, that may have been caused by malfunctioning public-address systems and poor advance work—a rarity on any Nixon trip—that brought grumbles from senior aides.

Several times Mr. Nixon, in apparent good humor, stopped to shake hands and chat with



The New York Times/April 11, 1974

onlookers. In Bad Axe, for example, he talked for several minutes with a local insurance man, describing to him the "\$500-million in insurance claims" being made as a result of the tornado at Xenia, Ohio, which the President visited yesterday.

According to Dean Burch, a Presidential counselor who accompanied Mr. Nixon today, the strategy of the trip was to "turn out the faithful" in the Thumb area to counteract the more Democratic vote in Bay City and Saginaw. Republican lethargy was a factor in a Democratic victory earlier this year in Vice President Ford's old House district in the Grand Rapids area.

Mr. Nixon touched on all of his standard themes in his speeches—his hopes for world peace, the Congressional "bottleneck" on energy bills, the importance of American military strength—but he keyed his remarks to two of the main thrusts of Mr. Sparling's campaign against J. Bob Traxler.

Mr. Sparling has accused Mr. Traxler of absenteeism as a

State Senator; the President told the voters that they needed "a man who will be a full-time Congressman . . . a man who will give 100 per cent."

Mr. Sparling has accused Mr. Traxler of being the tool of labor unions; the President told the voters that they needed "a man who will not be controlled by big labor . . . who will not be a rubber stamp."

There were boos and some chants of "Impeach Nixon" at several of the stops, but Mr. Nixon took no apparent notice of them. Instead, as is his in-

variable campaign practice, he praised the bands, talked about the weather (it was a "perfect, crisp, early spring day"), and pointed out Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts in the crowds.

President 'Very Pleased'

WASHINGTON, April 10 (UPI) — Shortly after the President's plane landed at Andrews Air Force Base today, his press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, said that Mr. Nixon was "very pleased" with his trip to Michigan.



At Bad Axe, Mich., a sea of faces greeted President Nixon, left center foreground, and James M. Sparling Jr., to left, as they made their way to a speaking stand. Mr. Nixon hailed Mr. Sparling as candidate for a seat in the House.

The New York Times/Gary Settle