

GOP Governors At Spring Meeting

By Earl C. Behrens
Political Editor

White Sulphur Springs,
West Virginia

Republican governors appeared to be united behind President Nixon — and united in their opposition to Democratic challengers to the president — yesterday as the spring conference of the Republican Governors Association got under way here.

The GOP national chairman Senator Robert Dole of Kansas, launched the first salvo with a blast at Democratic Senator Edward M. Kennedy for "hiding" his own presidential candidacy.

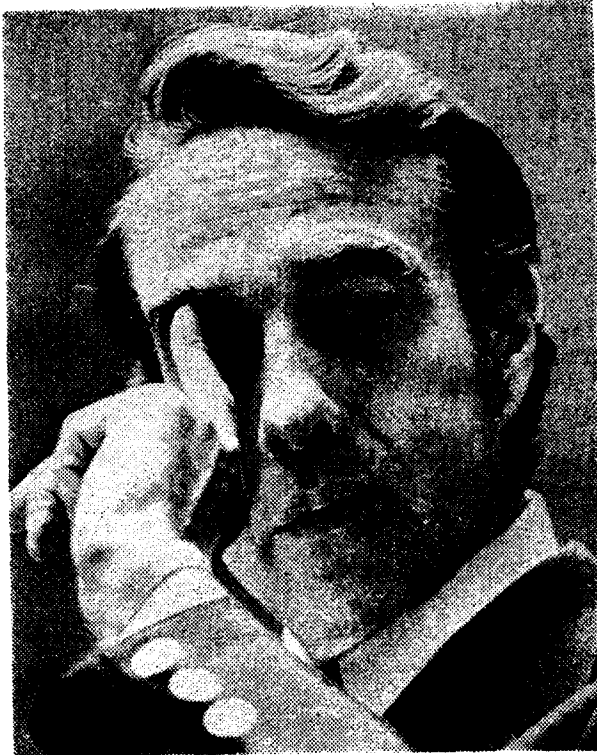
In a press conference preview of a speech he will deliver to the 18 (out of 20) Republican governors present, Dole said Kennedy would make his move if Senator Hubert Humphrey does not have the nomination locked up at the start of the Democratic National Convention in Miami Beach in July.

PEACE

Meanwhile, the rebellion evident among the GOP officials at their meeting in Sun Valley, Idaho, 16 months ago — shortly after the November 1970 elections in which Democrats won 11 Republican-held state houses — appears to have subsided.

Michigan Governor William G. Milliken, chairman of the Republican Governors Association will officially salute the administration — and Vice President Spiro T. Agnew in particular — today for improving ties between the GOP governors and the administration.

At the Sun Valley meeting, Milliken, Governor Tom McCall of Oregon and Governor Francis W. Sargent of Massachusetts had led a group that was fuming over the GOP's collapse in the



AP Wirephoto
GOP NATIONAL CHAIRMAN ROBERT DOLE
He reflected a moment at press conference

elections — in which Nixon and Agnew played major roles.

They felt the administration campaign approach was too overbearing and negative, with a heavy emphasis on law and order.

The unhappiness present then seems to have subsided.

PREDICTION

Dole predicted a victory for Nixon in November but said the campaign "will be a tough one."

Some Democratic hopefuls are "cop-out candidates," he said, bent on abandoning the South Vietnamese.

Kennedy, Dole declared, "looks and talks like a candidate" and has been using the Senate Judiciary Committee as "a political forum" in the hearings on the nomination of Richard Kleindienst as U.S. attorney general.

He called upon the Massachusetts Democrat to "declare himself—open up his candidacy, which to date he has kept under wraps while his fellow Democrats have been fighting it out in the primaries.

"The senator ought to let the people decide, in a primary or two, the merits of his views of this country. They appear not to be so different from the views of many of his colleagues who are running a campaign based on negativism and

criticism, with little in the way of positive solutions."

Kennedy "should be out in the open instead of hiding," Dole continued. "He has been the hatchet man for the Democrats."

PRAISE

The Kansas senator praised President Nixon's achievements during his administration — in winding down the war, bringing about the start of a major improvement in the economy, reforming the draft and postd service, and for other programs.

But he predicted the Democrats would "distort the record of the administration. (They are) desperate and know their only resource is to campaign against the record of the President — calling his successes defeats

and his achievements failures."

Undoubtedly, the governors will be asked to help the Nixon campaign. Some half-dozen of them, including Ronald Reagan and New York's Nelson Rockefeller, have already been asked to campaign in several states.

They also will be told of the Republican National Committee's plans to help finance GOP gubernatorial candidates this year.

Some 18 state houses — eight held by Republicans — are up for grabs this November, so and the governors want more of a policy-making role to help avert a repeat of the 1970 disaster.

"There are some pretty good indications the governors will play a role," said George Weeks, an aide to Governor Milliken.