

Reagan challenges front-runners

United Press International

WASHINGTON — President Reagan, saying he has reversed an awful past, challenged Democratic front-runners Thursday to campaign against his record instead of catering to the "trendy politics" of special interest groups.

In a biting political speech to about 600 leaders of the American Legion Women's Auxiliary, Reagan mentioned neither Walter Mondale nor Gary Hart by name. But the former vice president was his unmistakable target when Reagan said leaders of the late 1970s "openly blamed

their own inadequacies on our system of government and our people as a whole."

"The three-year record of this administration shows how dramatically we broke with the legacy of an awful immediate past," Reagan said. "Yes, this administration has a strong record, a hopeful record. It's open to scrutiny. We welcome it."

Apparently lumping together Mondale and Hart, the senator from Colorado, Reagan said he could not understand "how under the guise of compassion and fairness those who

once stood for the working people have now divorced themselves from the concerns of everyday Americans and turned themselves over to the trendy politics of the special interest groups."

Mondale has been attacked, by Hart among others, for catering to "special interests" such as organized labor. Hart was labeled a "trend Democrat" by prominent Democratic consultant Michael Barone, who said such Democrats "aren't quite as good at running things as they are at complaining about the failures of others."

Three times Reagan referred to the "malaise" or "loss of self-confidence" expressed by national leaders before his election. They were references to a speech made by President Carter in 1979 focusing on discontent among the public with American institutions.

"We've shown that America's problem wasn't a great national malaise at all, but a failure of leadership in Washington," Reagan said. "Contrary to 'some of the doom-criers who even now are saying our country is on the wrong course,' Reagan

said, "We have come a long way; success is in sight."

Asking if the audience wanted to "return to self-delusion about our adversaries and retreat in the face of provocation and aggression to the days of decaying defenses and shattered prestige," Reagan said, "Or will we get on with the unfinished agenda of the '80s?'"

He described the agenda as economic recovery, strong defense, discipline in schools, a crackdown on crime and "a renaissance of traditional values."

Meese says he will be impartial if elected

United Press International

WASHINGTON — White House counselor Edwin Meese, declaring he is not a "political firehorse," pledged Thursday before the Senate Judiciary Committee to act independently if confirmed as attorney general.

Meese seemed well-prepared and confident on the first day of hearings on his nomination by his close friend, President Reagan. But skeptical Democratic senators greeted him with a barrage of questions about whether he can forget his conservative political ties and serve as "the people's lawyer."

The 52-year-old former prosecutor insisted he can act in an "impartial, independent manner" as the nation's top law enforcement officer.

"I am not a political firehorse," he said, adding that his background as a lawyer and aide to Reagan both in California and Washington have been with the "the policy and government side," rather than with politics and campaigns.

Chairman Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., wasted no time in airing a host of questions about Meese

— including his personal finances and alleged political favors — that have been raised since his nomination Jan. 23 to replace Attorney General William French Smith, who is resigning as the top man at the Justice Department.

Point by point, Meese, now serving as Reagan's No. 1 adviser, testified there is no impropriety in his personal or professional affairs.

His explanations were clearly not enough to satisfy some, including Sens. Howard Metzenbaum, D-Ohio, and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass.

At Metzenbaum's request, the hearing will extend at least through Monday to hear testimony from three men invited to answer questions about their involvement in selling Meese's La Mesa, Calif., home and procurement of a \$60,000 personal loan.

Metzenbaum has questioned whether the loan and profitable home sale were arranged as a political favor, considering that two of the businessmen later received appointments to government posts.

A principle concern raised at the hearing is whether Meese, who is both Reagan's longtime friend and chief of staff of his 1980 election campaign, can impartially enforce the law — not only against criminals, but also in such sensitive areas as civil rights and antitrust.

Metzenbaum raised the ghost of Watergate in criticizing the appointment of someone who held a high campaign job to the critical Cabinet post of attorney general. John Mitchell managed Richard Nixon's 1968 campaign, became attorney general, then resigned to run Nixon's 1972 re-election effort. But Meese testified, "At no

time during my service as a member of Reagan's campaign committee did I incur any personal, political or other obligation that would in any way interfere with my ability to carry out the duties of attorney general ... in an impartial, independent manner."

To head off criticism, Meese confirmed he has asked the Army to rescind his controversial transfer to the Army Ready Reserve, made six days before he would have been forced to retire from inactive reserve.

Meese also disclosed he has

rearranged some of his personal finances, which have been questioned in part because of a \$60,000 loan arranged by his accountant, John McKean, who was later appointed to the U.S. Postal Service board of governors.

Meese said he expects approval by March 15 of a second mortgage on his \$300,000 McLean, Va., home to secure a new \$80,000 loan to substitute for an interim loan he secured to pay back the \$60,000, plus \$20,000 in interest.



Photo by BILL HUGHES

Taking a stroll

Mary Haislet of Bryan takes advantage of the warmer temperatures in the B-CS area by taking a walk around the campus with sons Jason (in the stroller) and John.

Lone Star Cafe may 'secede' from New York to join Texas

United Press International

NEW YORK — Owners of a Manhattan bar, which bills itself as the "Best Little Honky Tonk north of Abilene," said Thursday they will poll patrons on whether the tavern should secede from New York and annex itself to Texas.

The eyes of Texas have been on the Lone Star Cafe in Greenwich Village since Texas Gov. Mark White urged it to "sever its official ties" with New York and join Texas.

White's proclamation was part of the Lone Star state's plans for the 1986 celebration of its 150th year of independence from Mexico.

The state's 148th Independence Day will be celebrated today.

"Well this presents the Lone Star with a dilemma," Bill Dick, New Yorker and one of the cafe's owners, said.

Former Texas Gov. Dolph Briscoe was there to press the case for secession on White's behalf.

"The question remains, whether to secede or not to secede," said Dick, adding that he and co-owner Mort Cooperman have decided to survey their constituency.

"It kind of capitalizes on the animosity of Texans and New Yorkers alike," said Susan McClelland, a spokeswoman for the Texas Sesquicentennial

Commission, who was at the bar.

Over the next few months, patrons of the bar — known as a home away from home to transplanted Texans — will be given fliers asking them to vote on possible secession.

The box marked, "stay a part of New York City," has a miniature Statue of Liberty hovering over it; the box favoring annexation to Texas is adorned with longhorns.

The bar was named Texas' "official embassy," in New York two years ago, and Dick read recent telegrams from Texas no-

tables, including Sen. John Tower and Vice President George Bush, who congratulated the owners for helping to publicize the state's upcoming celebration.

Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, a Texan now in private practice in New York, has been reviewing the legal ramifications of secession.

The bar has already been officially designated a "Texas Independence Community" by the Sesquicentennial Commission.

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