

UPDATE/TEXAS

# Richards says radicals are taking over GOP

By John Gonzalez  
FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

FORT WORTH, Texas — Gov. Ann Richards, saying the “radical religious right” had overtaken the GOP and begun a Joseph McCarthy-like “witch hunt,” urged mainstream Republicans alarmed by the change to join the Democratic Party.

In a speech on the closing day of the Texas Democratic Convention, Mrs. Richards told about 9,000 delegates that her quarrel wasn't with people with fervent religious faith, but with those who would force beliefs on others.

“This is not about faith. . . . My faith and your faith do not call on us to make enemies of our fellow citizens and victories at any means necessary,” she said in the keynote address, which ended with a thunderous ovation.

“They have invited a Trojan horse into their midst. They have created a tremendous danger, both to them and for all of us. They have turned the party of Lincoln into the party of Operation Rescue.”

Republicans rejected Mrs. Richards' criticism and said

their party merely reflects Texas society.

“When she attacks the conservative philosophy and the values of the Republican Party, she is attacking the vast majority of Texans,” GOP Executive Director Karen Hughes said.

But Mrs. Richards told Democrats that the upcoming GOP convention could split that party, especially its internal debate over abortion.

“A lot of Republicans will . . . find that their party has left them, and we want to extend an invitation today to those Republicans who feel betrayed or abandoned. This party believes in inclusion,” Mrs. Richards said.

Many delegates leapt to their feet and cheered in support of her slams at GOP policies and at pointed personal attacks on her Republican gubernatorial opponent, George W. Bush, whose name she never directly mentioned.

“You can't wake up one morning, stand there shaving, look in the mirror and say: ‘Mm-mm, I think you're so cute. I think you ought to run for governor,’ ” Mrs. Richards said.