

REACTION LIMITED IN THE CONGRESS

But Democratic Leaders at Meeting in Capital Cheer News of Indictments

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WASHINGTON, March 1 — With many members of Congress out of town, initial reaction today to the new indictments in the Watergate case was limited and mostly restrained.

But the reaction was less restrained at a meeting of the Democratic National Committee when Robert S. Strauss, the party's national chairman, interrupted the proceedings to read the names of the seven indicted men.

The audience reacted with applause and a few hoots, and Mr. Strauss said, "I believe all of us are pleased that justice might finally work its will."

The Senate minority leader, Hugh Scott, of Pennsylvania, told reporters that he thought the American people "will withhold judgment pending a fair trial."

"Nothing should be said that would interfere with the conduct of a fair trial," he added.

Quick Trial Hoped For

Mr. Scott said that he hoped the trial would be completed quickly and before the November elections, because "it ought to be kept out of the political arena."

Mike Mansfield of Montana, the Senate majority leader, said: "The Constitution, legal and judicial processes are all functioning. They are not guilty until proven, as the President said."

In Phoenix, Vice President Ford opened a news conference by saying:

"We must keep in mind that under our system of justice that anyone accused of a crime is presumed innocent until proven guilty. I trust that all the defendants in the Watergate case will get a prompt and fair trial."

Senator Jacob K. Javits, Republican of New York, said that the indictments "reflect once again that the appropriate and ordinary processes of our criminal justice system are working, and that they are working without discrimination or favor with regard to the high positions of influence and

power formerly occupied by those who have been indicted."

Senator George McGovern of South Dakota, the 1972 Democratic Presidential nominee, told reporters, "It is fair to say the outcome [of the election] would have been different if we knew then what we know now." However, he declined to say that he might have won the election.

Earlier, Mr. McGovern delivered a prepared speech on the Senate floor saying that Mr. Nixon's "soiled Administration is now the chief threat to the Presidency." He said that impeachment was "the one clear constitutional remedy for the illness that is now destroying our nation."

"It can drive away the clouds of doubt, suspicion and fear and let the sun shine on America again," he said.

Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr., Democrat of New Jersey and chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, which is considering the possible impeachment of Mr. Nixon, declined to comment on the indictment. So did Representative Edward Hutchinson of Michigan, the committee's senior Republican.