

NIXON AIDES SURE HE HAS DEFLATED WATERGATE ISSUE

Warren Indicates Answers on Details Won't Be Given at News Conferences

8/17/73
By R. W. APPLE Jr.

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 16—The White House sought today to convey confidence that President Nixon had pulled the stinger of the Watergate scandal.

Mr. Nixon implied as much last night, in his televised speech and supplementary Watergate statement, when he forswore any intention to "enter upon an endless course of explaining and rebutting a complex of point-by-point claims and charges."

The President's wife put the matter more directly. Helen McCain Smith, her press secretary, said that Mrs. Nixon had conveyed to her "the feeling that Watergate is behind all of us now."

And the deputy Presidential press secretary, Gerald L. Warren, implied at this morning's regular briefing that Mr. Nixon might decide not to give substantive answers to detailed questions on Watergate at a news conference—his first since March 15—that is tentatively scheduled for next week at the Western White House in California.

Mr. Warren said that such questions could certainly be asked, but he would not say how they would be answered. Furthermore, he insisted, under interrogation about the questions that Mr. Nixon left unanswered last night, that the President had already spoken "forthrightly" about the case.

See Questions Fading

Underlying the White House stance, senior Presidential assist-

ants said, is the conviction that the specific questions to which Mr. Nixon refused last night to address himself will gradually fade from public consciousness, while his general denial and his future activities will come to the fore.

"We considered a point-by-point rebuttal," one official said. "Work was done on it. But the conclusion was that it wouldn't be politically productive. I wouldn't look for any retreat from that position, either at the news conference or any time in the future."

The initial reaction to the speech—support, for the most part, from Mr. Nixon's allies—condemnation from his critics—suggested that the President had not succeeded in

Continued on Page 8, Column 2

Aides Are Confident President Has Deflated Watergate Issue

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3
turning from Watergate to matters of state.

A sampling of the reaction follows:

Senator Daniel K. Inouye, Democrat of Hawaii, who is a member of the watergate committee: "There are ways of clearing himself — and for some reason he doesn't want to take that opportunity."

Finds Hearings Dragging

Senator, Edward J. Gurney, Republican of Florida, who is also a committee member: "The committee hearings have dragged on far too long and are seriously affecting the ability of the Government to function."

Senator Edward W. Brooke, Republican of Massachusetts: "The American people want the facts. The President gave us rhetoric. He did not tell the American people what he knows."

The White House believes, however, that the public, despite Mr. Nixon's 31 per cent in the most recent Gallup Poll, will be more inclined than the politicians to share his desire to get on with other business.

Mr. Warren said this morning that telephone calls to the White House last night had run about 5 or 6 to 1 in the President's favor. But he conceded that all Presidential speeches produced favorable mail and phone calls.

A spokesman for the Senate committee said that the first delivery of telegrams to the office of Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr. of North Carolina, the committee chairman, had been overwhelmingly complimentary — 221 favoring the committee and 31 opposing it. There was no indication that the hearings would be suspended, although they may be shortened, aides said.

The White House will be watching both the public polls and private polls that it has

commissioned for signs that the speech has begun to turn sentiment toward Mr. Nixon. No one on the Presidential staff expects the change to be rapid, but Mr. Nixon's aides are confident that a rebound will begin soon and will become more noticeable as he plunges into his work, including a scheduled journey to Europe in November.

But Mr. Nixon has said in the past, without success, that it was time to turn away from Watergate. If politicians continue to press him, he may be forced to speak again, and there were some signs that the pressure would continue. Many in Washington attached particular significance to the comment of Senator Barry Goldwater, Republican of Arizona, who said:

"In my opinion the President did not add anything to his other speeches that would tend to divert suspicion from him."