

'One Year of Watergate Is Enough'

Ziegler Bars Probe Answers

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RONALD L. ZIEGLER
... "ask what you will"

Echoing President Nixon's statement that "one year of Watergate is enough," press secretary Ronald Ziegler said yesterday that he would stop answering Watergate-related questions and focus on "the business of government."

The only exception to his new rule, he said, would be when he felt a formal statement was necessary or when the President's attorneys wished to "provide relevant answers."

Ziegler made his comment after a lengthy question-and-answer session on presidential tapes and other issues

related to charges of scandal in the administration.

"It is the position of the President and my position as White House spokesman that we will answer questions on the business of government and the positions we take on issues," he said.

"But it is the very firm determination—indeed, it is a fact—that we are not going to proceed day in and day out through 1974 answering questions and consuming ourselves with Watergate affairs.

"You can ask what you
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PRESIDENT, From A1

will . . . but the answer on the entire tape matter is that I have nothing to say."

Earlier in the exchange with newsmen, Ziegler said the President had issued a number of statements on Watergate and that he stood by them.

"What we have said is the truth" about the President's involvement, including the President's contention that he first learned about the cover-up on March 21, 1973, Ziegler said.

Ziegler and his deputy, Gerald L. Warren, have often refused to answer Watergate questions on the grounds that they related to arguments in the courts or that an answer might affect the rights of a defendant. Yesterday's statement indicated there would be even fewer responses in the future as the White House attempts to focus on other issues.

After the President's most recent news conference on Oct. 26 aides said he was tired of offering himself to hostile reporters who peppered him with Watergate questions.

Ziegler's statement was interpreted by some to mean that Mr. Nixon likewise will refuse to respond to Watergate questions. The President is expected to hold a news conference in the next two weeks.

Ziegler would offer no explanation of why Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott (B-Pa.) would declare that presidential tapes proved the President's innocence and Assistant Watergate Special Prosecutor Richard J. Davis would say his office had "no basis for believing" that former presidential counsel John W. Dean III lied under oath.

But Ziegler repeated that the President was correct in saying he first learned

about the cover-up on March 21, and not earlier as Dean testified.

"We have made a decision for a number of reasons not to discuss the tapes or release information on the tapes," he said.

Questioned about a story in The Washington Post yesterday reporting that Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger and White House chief of staff Alexander M. Haig Jr. urged Mr. Nixon to disassociate himself from three former top aides now under investigation, Ziegler said, "We are not going to respond to a story which was generated in that way and contains a mixture of supposed discussions, many of them out of context."

The Post story was based in part on an interview with former White House speech writer John K. Andrews Jr. He issued a statement yesterday saying he had been correctly quoted.

Ziegler did not deny any part of the story, but he said he could not remember details of conversations with Andrews, whom he said he seldom saw.

Andrews in the interview pictured Ziegler as a hard-liner who opposed the Kissinger-Haig proposals that

Mr. Nixon cease his relationships with his old associates who were under investigation and show a more contrite attitude.

Andrews was originally a Ziegler aide but later moved to the speech-writing staff.

In his statement yesterday, Andrews said that the American people "have been asked to swallow their concerns about presidential integrity" while the President and his aides have "worked out the Watergate matter in their own way behind closed doors."

In a related matter, Ziegler assailed California Secretary of State Edmund G. Brown Jr. for disclosing that the President's tax lawyer had testified in secret that the deed to the gift of Mr. Nixon's vice presidential papers was lost.

Ziegler said he did not know whether the deed was lost. But he said Brown is a Democratic candidate for governor who was acting from partisan motives.

Brown's statement "throws the whole matter out of context," Ziegler said.

"My personal view is that he (Brown) has dealt with the matter in an extremely irresponsible manner," Ziegler said.