Watergate Speech Decision

Why Nixon Was Vague

[illegible] Martin Schram [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] Nixon sat in [illegible] of Camp [illegible] ago, plan[illegible] strategy. [illegible] was a staff [illegible] draft[illegible] the basis of a [illegible] response to [illegible] against him. [illegible] already [illegible] the word that the [illegible] and not a [illegible] paper" at [illegible] his televised [illegible] address that [illegible] accusa[illegible] [illegible] time before the speech, Mr. Nixon scrapped the idea of a point-by-point response. In the solitude of Camp David he decided that it would not serve his interests to delve publicly into the specific details of the Watergate scandal that has shaken his presidency.

Why did Mr. Nixon back away from the strategy of a detailed, point by point response? Interviews with several of the President's senior advisers brought these explanations:

• "At first we thought it might be possible to do something detailed and fairly definitive . . . but then it became clear that every answer he gave would simply create more questions in turn and it would go on and on and on."

• "It became a question of what was the apprporiate level of detail for the President of the United States to adopt . . . a question of the appropriateness of getting into the pit."

• "He was worried that it (a detailed response) would not end the matter . . . worried that witnesses would then be called back at the hearings to be asked to respond."

A key factor in the President's decision to offer a broad brush response to the Watergate accusations was his conclusion that the public is tired of [illegible] Watergate [illegible] day.

The White House commissioned no private poll on this subject, the advisers said. "It's just a sense of his," one senior White House man said.

Another said: "The feeling was that there was a [illegible] taking place [illegible] shift to public [illegible] public irritation with Watergate."

In essence, the Nixon men were saying, Mr. Nixon offered the public no detailed explanation because he figured he got off the hook without one.