

By Bill Terry

Special to The Washington Post

JACKSON, Miss., April 25 — The people of Mississippi seem to love President Nixon more because of his Watergate woes. It's an unusual love affair in a state where until recent years Republicanism has been anathema.

The President, beset by scandals in his administration and faced with possible impeachment, came here looking for support in a once-solidly Democratic state, and he got it.

In his speech before a luncheon audience of 3,000 members of the Mississippi Economic Council and some 7,000 spectators, Mr. Nixon spoke, as he has in the past, of "America's great goals"; "prosperity without war," the need to end "the most nagging problem of inflation," self-sufficiency in energy by 1980 and a "strong America" with the spunk "to see it through" during periods of "difficult times."

The spectators, mostly young people in their teens and 20s, applauded frequently during his 25-minute talk. The President ended by saying of America's goals: "We cannot fail. We shall not fail. God bless America!"

There was no jeering or heckling and no anti-Nixon placards were visible in the auditorium itself. But outside, the President was met by a dozen youths carrying posters that said "Impeach the President" and "Take Crime Out of the White House." The signs were carried by both whites and blacks.

Inside, several placards said "Nixon Now More than Ever" and "Mississippi Youth for Nixon."

Blacks, who made up about 20 per cent of the audience, were generally restrained in their applause or withheld it completely.

White reaction was typified by Haskell Wade of Jackson, a retired chemical worker who now owns a small farm. Said Wade, "They [people in Washington] don't care about that Watergate. They just want Nixon out. I think he's a good man. He's done so much for the country, like ending the war. He's had a lot of trouble just like we've had plenty of it in the South."

Wade said that the President's visit here showed that

he "cares about us in the South. Before, other Presidents treated us like a stepchild. But he [Nixon] represents the whole country and the South. I think his visit here was extra good."

A young white, Mike Heglin, 18, of Jackson, said, "His visit will do a lot for us. By giving him a welcome like this he'll like it and will remember us."

Reaction among blacks in the audience was skeptical but not hostile. Marvin Neely, 20, a student at Jackson State University here, said of Nixon, "Now he's talking about deeds and goals he's going to do, not about deeds like Watergate, that he's already done." Neely recalled the shooting incident at Jackson State in 1970, in which two blacks were killed, saying, "Nixon said nothing then."

James Smith, 19, another black student at Jackson State, called the President's visit "useless if he thinks it will help him fight impeachment. This visit here won't change his guilt. He knows he's in trouble in the North and East so he came here among these so-called Democrats."

By "so-called Democrats," Smith was referring to the split in the Mississippi Democratic Party between the "loyalists"—composed mostly of blacks and white liberals—and the "regular Democrats," who represent the white establishment and are ultra-conservative. It is the "regular Democrats" who have been so strong for Mr. Nixon and who dominated the highly pro-Nixon audience today.

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Friday, April 26, 1974

THE WASHINGTON POST

# Nixon Seeks, Gets Backing In Mississippi