

Republicans Reflect Relief Over Nixon's Watergate Move

Nixon Pleases GOP

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Republican politicians reacted with a near-unanimous sigh of relief last night to President Nixon's intervention in the Watergate case.

Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), one of the many Nixon stalwarts who had expressed public dismay at the White House silence on the burgeoning charges, expressed the general sentiment of his fellow partisans when he said, "I am very pleased that President Nixon has made it possible for us to get to the bottom of the Watergate situation."

Mr. Nixon's statement, revealing a new Justice Department investigation of the case and promising that his aides would testify to the Senate investigating committee, fell short of the "major revelations" some lawmakers had expected. But no prominent Democrats criticized the President's statement as inadequate, and Republicans seemed to feel it was at least a long step toward safer political ground.

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Sen. Lowell Weicker (R-Conn.), a member of the special Senate panel probing the break-in at Democratic headquarters, said he was "delighted" by Mr. Nixon's statements. Weicker had denounced the President's previous statement invoking executive privilege for his aides, but last night he said that "with both the Executive Branch and the Legislative Branch charging after the truth, we stand a much better chance of getting at the truth."

Rep. John J. Rhodes of Arizona, chairman of the House Republican Policy Committee and of the 1972 platform committee, typified the turnaround in attitudes among GOP "regulars."

Last Friday, Rhodes had said "the continual mystery" surrounding Watergate "is hurting the image of President Nixon and the Republican Party in the eyes of people everywhere."

Last night, the Congressman said, "The President has taken a giant step toward assuring that all relevant facts . . . are brought before the American people. I applaud him for doing so."

Some Republicans, including Sen. Robert Packwood (R-Ore.), suggested that it was significant that Mr. Nixon had not reiterated his past statements of confidence that no one on his staff had any knowledge of, or involvement in the political espionage case.

But the general GOP sentiment seemed to be that if some presidential associates were going to be implicated, the political cost would be reduced if it happened soon—and with official White House cooperation.

Party chairman George Bush, who disclosed that he had discussed Republican apprehensions about the case "directly with the President," said he was "very pleased" with Mr. Nixon's actions.

"He fully understands the problem," Bush said. "This will do wonders toward clearing the air . . . Though some may be fingered as guilty, this course of action will clear the names of the innocent who, in my opinion, have been injured by leaks, hearsay and innuendo."

Full support was also expressed by Senate Republican Leader Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania and Sen. Bill Brock of Tennessee, chairman of the GOP senatorial campaign committee.

Packwood, one of many Republicans facing re-election next year who had expressed public unhappiness with the previous White House stance, said he thought the ground rules for testimony laid down by the

President were satisfactory," as long as they (the White House aides) don't abuse or overdo it" in claiming executive privilege.

Packwood urged the President to make public the results of the new Justice Department investigation as soon as possible.

Sen. Charles McC. Mathias Jr. (R-Md.), also facing re-election next year, said it was "high time" the President allowed his staff members to testify, but called the decision "constructive" and "extremely helpful."

In a case where partisanship has never been far below the surface, Democrats

last night chose to make common cause with their Republican opponents.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield of Montana said he had "anticipated" the decision, on the basis of his own meetings with the President during the past week, adding that he was "pleased" with the action.

Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.) used the same word—"pleased"—and Sen. Lloyd Bentsen of Texas, chairman of the Democratic senatorial campaign committee, said he was now "hopeful" that "all the facts can be developed and made known to the public."