

Some Strong GOP Criticism of Nixon

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President Nixon's handling of the Watergate scandal was strongly criticized yesterday by leading Republicans who warned that dwindling confidence in the government was damaging both the country and the party.

Two dozen Republican leaders from the South meeting here privately concluded that the party might function better by divorcing itself from the administration unless there was quick action "to restore confidence and reorganize the White House."

Also, Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, who was the first and most prominent Republican to publicly urge the President to act in the matter, said the President has not gone far enough to restore confidence in his administration.

DISMAY

"It is not easy for me to say this about my country or my President," Goldwater said in a statement, "but I think the time has come when someone must say to both of them, 'Let's get going.'"

The two reactions indicated spreading dismay among Republicans over the Water-

gate scandal and its accompanying paralysis of the administration and the party structure.

That concern was expressed by Clarke Reed, Republican State Chairman of Mississippi, who has been a key element in the southern strategy painstakingly constructed by the party over the last several years.

As chairman of the closed-door meeting, Reed said, it was his judgment that the group "wants this thing absolutely out in the open and completely straight, no matter who is involved, including the President."

Reflecting the bitterness of party professionals that developed during last year's campaign because they were largely excluded from the national campaign and from access to the President by high-ranking presidential aides including H. R. Halde- man and John Ehrlichman, who recently resigned, Reed said that unless the White House is reorganized soon with "some good political people . . . the whole thing is up for grabs.

"We have been banging on the door too long," Reed said. "We hope the President will be with us, but if he isn't and he shows he isn't; if he doesn't change

now, after all that we've seen—then we're going to have to go about our business and just not worry about the White House."

Reed said some party leaders believe the White House has no more than 30 to 60 days within which to act to restore confidence in the reorganization of the White House and the functioning of the administration.

He also endorsed Goldwater's statement.

SIGNS

Goldwater's remarks involved domestic and international signs that confidence in the Nixon administration has plummeted. Citing the recent sharp increases in the price of gold and a drop in prices on the stock market, the senator said the "sordid" affair has dominated all action at the top level of government. Further, he said:

"A visit to the Pentagon, which is the seat of our ability and responsibility to maintain peace in this world, leave one with the impression that these services are suffering, suffering from a lack of civilian direction because of the vacancies not yet filled at the secretariat levels.

"A reorganization of bu-

reaus is a decided must for the continuance of our form of government."