

NYTimes
**Southern G.O.P. and Goldwater
Critical of Nixon on Watergate**

By **BILL KOVACH** MAY 17 1973
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 16 — President Nixon's handling of the Watergate scandal was strongly criticized today by leading Republicans, who warned that dwindling confidence in the Government was damaging both the country and the party. Some 25 Republican party leaders from the Southern states 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 today Senator Barry Goldwater, of Arizona, who was the first and most prominent Republican to urge the President publicly to act in the matter, said today that the President had not gone far

enough to restore confidence in his Administration.

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

Apparently unrelated, the two reactions clearly indicate a rapidly spreading dismay among Republicans over the lingering nature of the scandal and its accompanying paralysis of both the Administration and the party structure.

That concern was expressed by Clarke Reed, Republican state chairman of Mississippi, who has been a key element

Continued on Page 36, Column 7

Continued From Page 1, Col. 7

in the Southern strategy painstakingly constructed by the party over the last several years.

As chairman of the closed meeting, Mr. 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 excluded from the national campaign, and from access to the President by H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, Mr. 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," Mr. 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."

Underlying the urgency felt by the party leaders, some of whom are recent converts from the Democratic party like himself, Mr. Reed said that they 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 Senator Goldwater's statement, which was issued earlier in the day.

Confidence Found Wanting

Senator Goldwater's remarks involved domestic and international signs that confidence in the Nixon Administration had plummeted. Citing the recent sharp increase in the price of gold and a drop in prices on the stock market, the Senator said the "sordid" affair had 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,

leaves one with the impression that these services are suffering from a lack of civilian direction because of the vacancies not yet filled at the secretariat levels.

"A reorganization of bureaus is a decided must for the continuance of our form of government."

While urging that Watergate, which he described as a "blot upon the political records of the United States," should be cleaned up immediately, Senator Goldwater deplored its domination of the entire machinery of government.

"And it is to this end," he said, "that I urge my President to start making moves in the direction of leadership, which has suffered from lack of attention because of an understandable concern about Watergate."

The meeting at the Sheraton-Carlton Hotel of the Southern party chairmen was designed specifically to analyze the impact of Watergate on the party's political future and reflected a radical shift in attitudes in recent weeks. Two weeks ago, Mr. Reed was asked about the political impact of the Watergate scandal and said, at that time, he could see none.

Kevin Phillips, conservative news columnist, and Bryce N. Harlow, who once served as Congressional liaison for the Nixon Administration, were invited to the meeting to discuss the situation. Mr. Harlow declined to comment on his analysis and Mr. Phillips would only say that he had "a pessimistic view of the situation."

Meanwhile, Senator Robert Dole, Republican of Kansas, who is former national G.O.P. chairman, said in a radio interview on the Columbia Broadcasting System that the public still doubts that the President has done enough to clean his Administration of the Watergate stain.

"I think there is still a lot of doubt in the eyes of the public," Senator Dole said. "I can speak from visits to New York, Indiana and Kansas, for example. I think many people want to be convinced."