

WXPast Godwin Doubts He Wants Nixon

By Helen Dewar

Washington Post Staff Writer

Republican gubernatorial candidate Mills E. Godwin, claiming President Nixon has erred in dealing with Watergate, said yesterday he doubts that he wants the President to come to Virginia to aid his campaign.

"Given the climate in Virginia as of this time . . ." said the former Democratic governor who is seeking a second term as a Republican, "I don't think it would be the thing to do."

Answering questions about Watergate at a breakfast meeting with about 20 Washington reporters, Godwin also said he believed the scandal has undoubtedly slowed the

movement of other conservative Virginia Democrats to the GOP.

But he said he does not regret his own conversion and does not feel that discontent in Virginia over Watergate will hurt his own candidacy, although he acknowledged it was "not a plus factor."

Godwin, running against Lt. Gov. Henry E. Howell, a Democrat-turned-independent, was chairman of an advisory committee to the Virginia Committee for the Re-election of the President last year. There have been no substantiated allegations of involvement by the Virginia group in the Watergate situation.

At a luncheon with Washington Post editors and reporters

later in the day, Godwin said he believes Mr. Nixon's capacity to govern has been damaged, but added that few Virginians want to see him resign or be removed from office.

"Most people that I talk to just wish he could absolve himself of the responsibility that apparently he is involved in here," said Godwin, adding that most of them feel he has not yet done so.

"One of the tragedies of Watergate is that it has impaired the ability of the President to move forward with his program on the economy and other areas," Godwin said.

Asked if he felt the President could repair the damage already done his administration, Godwin said: "I don't be-

lieve, frankly, that he can do it until he can make some reasonable, plausible explanation of things that have been done."

He also said he believed Mr. Nixon made a political mistake in refusing to release tapes of recorded conversations dealing with Watergate, although he said he was not sure of the legalities involved.

As for Mr. Nixon coming to Virginia this fall, Godwin said no firm decision has yet been made on whether any outside help will be sought, reflecting traditional Virginia distaste for out-of-state campaign assistance.

He noted that a last-minute Nixon visit helped elect Republican Linwood Holton four

to Campaign for Him in Va.

years ago but said conditions have changed, although he did not rule out a bid for presidential help if the President resolves his Watergate problems.

Godwin said he would have no such difficulties welcoming Vice President Agnew to Virginia.

At the luncheon, Godwin indicated that the race-related issues of school busing and consolidation, coupled with Howell's closeness to organized labor and his acceptance of union money from outside the state, would be dominant issues in the campaign.

He told the other reporters at breakfast that another principal issue would be what he called Howell's "extremely leftist political views."

He discounted suggestions that Howell has a strong black-white populist coalition and said some earlier Howell statements indicating less than adamant opposition to busing and consolidation will not prove popular among populist supporters of Alabama Gov. George Wallace.

"Mr. Howell's record on that issue will be made clear," he said, adding that he intends to make use of a taped television interview from 1972 when Howell said busing across local jurisdictional lines might be necessary to desegregate schools.

Godwin said the busing-consolidation issue is not dead despite a recent Supreme Court ruling that set aside a

lower court order for consolidation of Richmond area school districts. So long as other similar cases are before the court, it will be an issue in many areas of Virginia, he said.

If District of Columbia children were to be bused to Northern Virginia, he added, "you would see a minor revolution of sorts."

At the breakfast, Godwin also defended his own espousal of "massive resistance" in the 1950s, saying the policy of closing schools to avoid desegregation was necessary to forestall a chaotic reaction to federal court desegregation orders. But, he said, "that's a finished chapter as far as Virginia is concerned."



GOV. MILLS GODWIN
... doesn't regret switch