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**PRESIDENT BARS
'AN EASY COPOUT'
BY A RESIGNATION**

**Tells Chicago Executive Club
He Will Not Be a Party to
Destroying Presidency**

HE ALLUDES TO MARCH 21

**But His Remarks About the
Meeting With Dean Fail to
Resolve the Uncertainties**

By R. W. APPLE Jr.

Special to The New York Times

CHICAGO, March 15—President Nixon declared today that he would not resign and that he refused to "be a party to the destruction of the Presidency of the United States."

"Resignation is an easy cop-out," Mr. Nixon told more than 1,900 members of the Executive Club of Chicago in an extended question and answer session. "It might satisfy some of my good friendly partisans who would rather not have the problem of Watergate bothering them." [Question 7, page 12.]

But, the President added, there could never be a strong Presidency if he resigned, because any President could be forced from office by someone "leveling some charges."

"Resignation of this President on charges of which he is not guilty, resignation simply because he happened to be low in the polls, would forever change our form of government," Mr. Nixon said.

"It would lead to weak and unstable Presidencies in the future and I will not be a party to the destruction of the Presidency of the United States of America."

Less-Pointed Questions

Beginning another effort to rebuild his standing with the electorate through a series of public appearances, Mr. Nixon replied confidently to 14 questions. He displayed none of the nervousness of gesture and tremulousness of voice that he exhibited at his March 6 news conference, and he was well received.

The questions were far less pointed than those the President is accustomed to dealing

with in Washington, and no one asked him about the conflict in his accounts of a crucial March 21, 1973, meeting with John W. Dean 3d, a former White House counsel.

White House spokesmen had said that Mr. Nixon would be prepared to explain the conflict here.

Without being asked, Mr. Nixon alluded briefly to the March 21 meeting. But he did

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not clear up the confusion resulting from his past statements; in fact, his language added further uncertainty.

In a prepared statement released on Aug. 15, 1973, Mr. Nixon said of the March 21 meeting: "I was told then that funds had been raised for payment to the [Watergate] defendants . . . but I was told only that the money had been used for attorneys' fees and family support, not that it had been paid to procure silence from the recipients."

On March 6, however, at his news conference, the President said that Mr. Dean had told him that "payments had been made to the defendants for the purpose of keeping them quiet, not simply for their defense."

Statement Repeated

Today, Mr. Nixon, speaking of himself in the third person, reiterated that at the March 21 session "the President learned for the first time at that time that payments had been made to the defendants."

As to what he was told of the purpose of the payments, Mr. Nixon commented that he wanted to correct "what may have been a misapprehension when I spoke to the press on March the 6th in Washington." Then he added:

"It was alleged that the payments that had been made to the defendants were made for the purpose of keeping them still."

Mr. Nixon noted that H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman and John N. Mitchell—all former associates now under indictment—all denied that the payments constituted hush money, and "they certainly should be allowed the right in court to establish their innocence."

His language was less than precise, but it appeared that Mr. Nixon was saying that Mr. Dean had charged on March 21 that the payments were hush money, but that Mr. Nixon had no way of knowing whether his version was true or whether

his other, senior associates were telling the truth.

The distinction is central. If Mr. Nixon knew that hush money had been paid he could be charged with misprision of felony for failing to report the fact to law enforcement agencies. But if he had only accusations that weren't substantiated—indeed contradicted by others—the misprision statute, which uses the word "knowledge," would not apply.

But Mr. Nixon still failed to explain why his Aug. 15 statement had said Mr. Dean did not mention "hush money." The President has now taken three different positions on what Mr. Dean told him.

Time and again during his appearance before the executives, Mr. Nixon stated his belief in a strong Presidency, coupling that to his unwillingness to resign and to his reluctance to give any further tape recordings or documents to the House Judiciary Committee, which is studying impeachment.

If he gave the committee "a fishing license" for the White House files, the President said, future Presidents would be surrounded by "eunuchs," afraid to give their bosses the candid advice Presidents need.

After he had finished speak-

ing, and chatted briefly with persons at the head table, Mr. Nixon returned to the microphone to say that while he was leaving the hall, he would not be leaving the Presidency until 1977.

Only once did he hit out at his critics, other than a general comment that Watergate had been "over-publicized." When James Bell, a Republican State Senator from Joliet, remarked that the President was "beloved" by many people in his district, Mr. Nixon replied, "perhaps you should tell your United States Senator that."

Percy Not Present

That was an allusion to Senator Charles H. Percy, Republican of Illinois, who has said that he believes Mr. Nixon will be impeached. Mr. Percy, a potential candidate for the Republican Presidential nomination in 1976, was absent from the head table today. His office said he had a previous speaking engagement in Cincinnati.

Mr. Nixon used the opportunity to say how he thought a Republican candidate could win in 1976.

The platform, the President remarked, must be able to point to prosperity without war and with minimum inflation, declin-

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ing crime and drug addiction rates, a welfare program that will "finally make it more profitable to go to work," and a health care program built on the foundations of private medicine.

"Now if we can accomplish some of these goals," he said, "we will have a good chance to win. If we don't work out those problems it isn't going to make any difference who gets the nomination. The candidate from Mayor Daley's party will win."

Mayor Richard J. Daley of Chicago, sitting behind the President, beamed. He had met Mr. Nixon at the airport on his arrival here last night.

Question on Inflation

Asked about inflation, Mr. Nixon said that it would probably continue through the second quarter but that it would subside later in the year.

"It will go down provided we are responsible in our Government spending programs and that the Congress does not go on a wild spending spree," he said. "It'll go down, second, because the energy crisis having been reduced to a problem, we'll have less pressure upwards in that particular area."

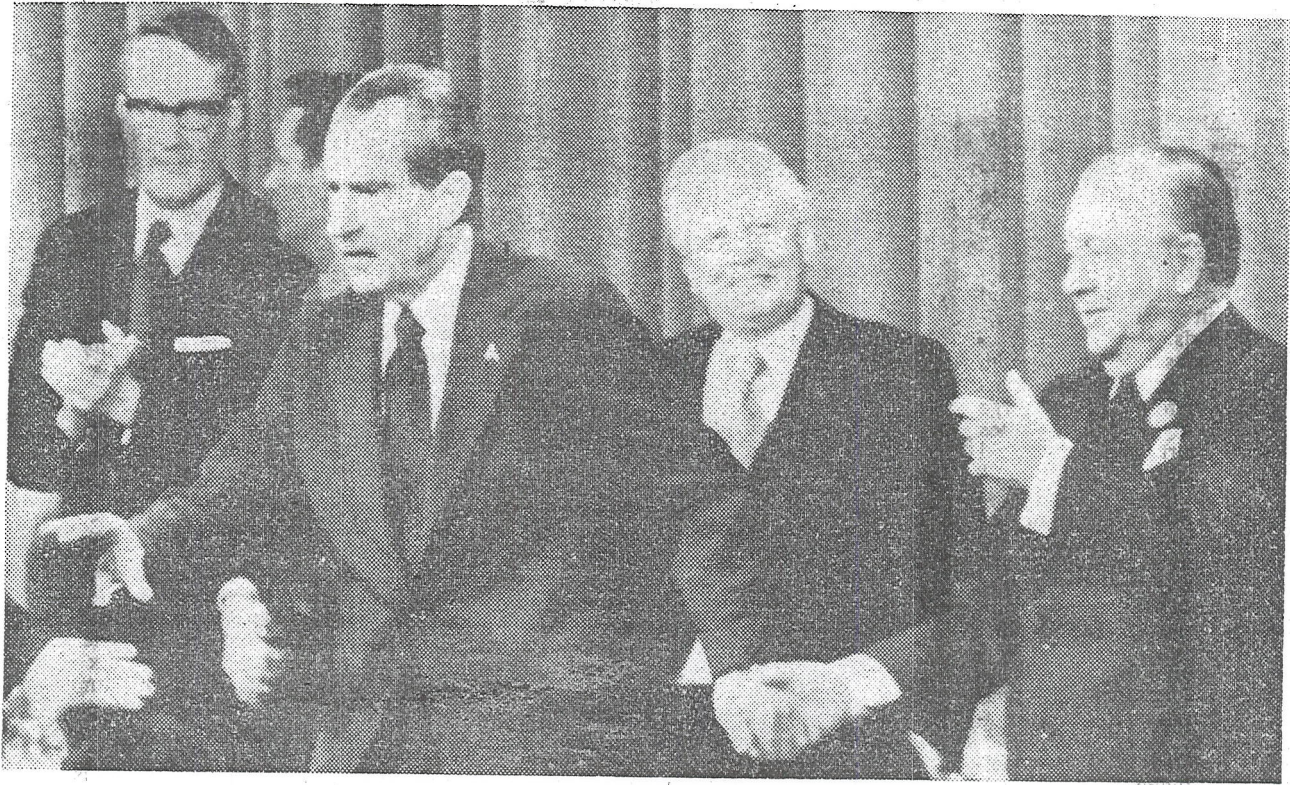
"And it will go down, too, because the prospects insofar as food production appear to

be very good at the present time, although this is one that is extremely difficult to project."

In response to other questions, Mr. Nixon said that he felt that he could under no circumstances testify in any court room in connection with the Watergate trials and disagreed with a questioner's suggestion that national votes of confidence in the Presidency might be a useful addition to the American system.

Mr. Nixon appeared, in discussing his taxes, to overstate somewhat the views of the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Russell B. Long, Democrat of Louisiana, one of the key men investigating Mr. Nixon's tax records.

The President quoted Mr. Long as saying that there had been no evidence of fraud on the part of the President. In fact, Mr. Long has been saying that there had been no definitive evidence produced yet.



United Press International

President Nixon leading Mayor Richard J. Daley to the center of the head table at luncheon in Chicago. Mr. Nixon apologized to Mayor Daley for drifting into partisan politics during question-and-answer session. He said,

"If at times I appeared to be a bit partisan, I didn't intend it at all." In the background are Stanton R. Cook, left, the president of The Chicago Tribune, and David M. Kennedy, the former Secretary of the Treasury.