

Nixon Promises 'To Stand, Fight' For Presidency

Hits Critics In Congress And the Press

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

HOUSTON, March 19—

With the third friendly audience in less than a week cheering him on, President Nixon carried his anti-impeachment campaign to the people again tonight with new attacks on a foot-dragging Congress and a critical press.

"It . . . takes courage to stand and fight for what you believe is right," he said to an applauding crowd, "and that's what I'm going to do."

He called again for a speedy resolution of the impeachment question "because, believe me, dragging out Watergate drags down America."

He made the comment in declaring that if he provided all the information the House Judiciary Committee is requesting it would prolong the investigation "that has already gone on too long."

Although he appeared somewhat less assured than he did last Friday in Chicago and more tense than in the relaxed setting of the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville Saturday, the President seemed to make a hit with his audience, which he hopes will influence the legislators sitting in judgment of him.

Appearing almost in a campaign role, and repeating arguments and phrases he has tried on other occasions, Mr. Nixon broke little new ground except in his opening announcement on energy: rationing will be unnecessary and Sunday gasoline sales can be resumed as a result of the lifting of the Arab oil boycott.

With Congress appearing to be increasingly hostile toward him, he nevertheless launched an attack on it for "dragging its feet" on energy measures he has recommended.

In several jibes at the press, he declared that he is not obsessed by press reports, is not going to be diverted from his objectives by press criticism, and thinks a President should "treat the press just as fairly as the press treats him."



United Press International

President Nixon in Houston: Sen. James Buckley's statement "does not cause me to reassess my position."

The President asserted, when asked if he believed the country might be better off if the Watergate burglary had never been detected, that the break-in was "wrong," "stupid" and "should never have happened."

"It should never have been covered up," he said. "I've done everything I can to see that it is uncovered."

He said he has probably

gone further than is wise in waiving executive privilege so that the special prosecutor, the grand jury and now the House Judiciary Committee can have access to all the facts.

He made no new concessions, however, to the Judiciary Committee, which has accused him of trying to define the limits of its impeachment inquiry and of withholding essential information it requires to do its job.

Turning to the economy, the President acknowledged that the past few months have been difficult. That difficult period will continue for a few

See PRESIDENT, A10, Col. 5

PRESIDENT, From A1

months, due mainly to the energy crisis, he said.

Nevertheless, he maintained that in the latter part of the year unemployment will go down and the pressure for higher prices will abate.

Increased production of energy and of food is the chief need in fighting and getting the economy on a sounder footing, he said.

"Farmers have never had it so good," Mr. Nixon said when asked what assurance farmers have that higher production will not eventually lead to a break in prices.

"I do not expect that farmers will have a bad year," he said.

The hour-long appearance here before the convention of the National Association of Broadcasters was different from his appearance Friday before the Executives' Club in Chicago in that the questions were tougher and pointed more to issues in the news. A panel made up of radio-television news directors and invited members of the White House press corps resulted in more adversary questions.

When CBS correspondent Dan Rather won applause as

he approached the microphone to ask a question, the President asked Rather if he was running for something.

"No, sir, Mr. President," Rather replied. "Are you?"

NBC correspondent Tom Brokaw followed up with another tough question that in effect accused the President of providing inaccurate and misleading information in discussing the issue of confidentiality of presidential papers.

Without directly responding to Brokaw's challenge, the President repeated his argument that the principle of confidentiality of presidential papers must be preserved to protect future Presidents.

Without it, he said, there would be instability in the office, adding that he would not give in to any demand that would weaken the presidency or result in "destruction of the presidency."

Mr. Nixon said he would never give Congress a "hunting license or fishing license" to search through presidential papers, but he maintained again that he had and would cooperate with the Judiciary Committee.

Nevertheless, he insisted that the committee already has "enough information to conduct its investigation and to

see whether any charges against the President are true or false."

Discussing why a President should not resign under fire or change policies because his popularity is down, Mr. Nixon recalled once more the bombing of North Vietnam in December, 1972.

Despite the fact that some members of Congress believe he should be impeached for carrying out that bombing, he reiterated his belief that it was a wise and necessary act in ending the Vietnam war.

Some of his own advisers urged him to stop the bombing when criticism mounted, he said. "I considered their advice," he said. "I did not take it."

The President said he wanted future Presidents to be able to make such a "strong, right decision."

Before returning to Washington last Wednesday, Mr. Nixon will visit the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center here Wednesday morning. He has no other announced schedule for the week, but press secretary

Ronald L. Ziegler, referring to the stepped-up public campaign the President has waged in the past week, said Mr. Nixon would make appearances "on a regular basis."