

Chamber Delegates Ask Quick End to Watergate

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WASHINGTON, April 29—If a sampling of the mood of members of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States is any indication, Main Street U.S.A. wants the Watergate crisis to come to an end at almost any cost—including the impeachment of President Nixon.

Every one of more than a dozen delegates to the chamber's annual meeting here said feelingly when interviewed today that the Watergate and impeachment proceedings had dragged on much too long and should come to an end so that the country could concentrate on more important matters.

That is a theme frequently sounded by President Nixon and his aides.

But most of the Chamber of Commerce delegates interviewed said they felt that if it took an impeachment of the President—or his resignation—to restore normal conditions to Government, then so be it.

"I think we ought to get back to the business of running the country rather than flounder around in Watergate," Roy Schuette of Rochester, Minn., said. "If it takes the impeachment or resignation of President Nixon," he added, "then let's do it."

'Get Watergate Over With'

Mr. Schuette, who is senior vice president of the First National Bank in Rochester, said that he personally did not favor the impeachment or resignation of the President. He explained that he just wanted "to get Watergate over with."

Mr. Schuette's response seemed to be fairly typical of the Chamber of Commerce delegates. The chamber represents businesses of all sizes and trade interests in cities, towns and counties across the country, but it has come to symbolize the small businessmen of Main Street, Middle America.

Judging by those interviewed today, most chamber members do not personally want to see President Nixon forced from office. In fact, they are likely to give the President a very warm welcome when he addresses them at their banquet tomorrow night.

'Get On With Government'

The delegates interviewed today—prosperous businessmen all—indicated that they would be happy if the Watergate and impeachment issues just dried up and disappeared. They were not too certain how this could happen, but William F. Radcliff of the Muncie-Delaware County, Ind., chamber suggested that the trauma would end if the "news media and the press stopped dragging it out."

Ralph D. Powell, an executive of the Sacramento, Calif., chamber, said that in his home area "the consensus is: 'Let's get on with government and forget about Watergate. We've

spent enough time on it already.'"

But most of the chamber members who discussed Watergate agreed that the solution would not be that simple.

"The feeling in Sandusky is what it is all over the country," said G. Russell Bateson, an official of the chamber in that Ohio city. "We should do one of two things: Impeach the President or get off his back."

One of the reasons behind Mr. Bateson's desire to end the Watergate debate—even if it required the impeachment of the President—was his feeling that "the Republicans will be badly hurt by it this fall."

Like Mr. Bateson, the chamber as an organization seems somewhat apprehensive about the prospects facing the Republican party this year.

The president of the chamber, Arch Booth, warned recently that an overwhelming victory by the Democratic party—although he did not mention the party by name—would dangerously upset the balance of power in government, and be "disastrous to business."

The chamber's leaders are exhorting members to be active politically this year and to encourage employees to be active as well.

A Political Session

Much of today's opening session of the annual meeting were devoted to politics. The speakers at today's luncheon were John J. Rhodes of Arizona, the House Republican leader, and Robert S. Strauss, Chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

The chamber is not a political organization, but most of its businessmen members tend to be politically conservative and probably a majority of them are Republicans.

One chamber official commented that the opening of today's annual meeting, held at Constitution Hall amid strident marching music by the Marine Corps Band, was "a Mitchell-Stans pep rally." This was a reference to yesterday's acquittal of John N. Mitchell, the former Attorney General, and Maurice H. Stans, the former Secretary of Commerce, of conspiracy and perjury charges.

The Watergate crisis was not mentioned much by the speakers today. But it was obviously much on the minds of chamber members in the audience.

"There is a general concern over credibility and corruption in government," said Howard A. Deever, who heads his own manufacturers representative concern in Monroeville, Pa., a suburb of Pittsburgh.

The chamber today elected Charles H. Smith Jr., chairman of Sifco, Inc., a metallurgical concern in Cleveland, as chairman for the coming year.