

PRESIDENT VOWS HE'LL DO NOTHING TO WEAKEN OFFICE

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Tells Cheering Supporters That Strong Presidency Is Needed for Peace

PRAISED AT LUNCHEON

Nixon Asserts Backing by 1,400 Will Strengthen Him on Trip Today

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WASHINGTON, June 9 —

President Nixon told a wildly cheering group of ardent supporters today that a strong Presidency was needed to achieve peace in the world and pledged that "I shall do nothing that will weaken this office."

In an address to a "citizens' congress" sponsored by the National Citizens' Committee for Fair Play to the Presidency, Mr. Nixon said their support would strengthen him as he departed tomorrow on what he said would be "a long and difficult journey" to five Middle Eastern countries.

"You come from the heart of America and you have touched our hearts," he told the 1,400 neatly groomed men and women who had paid \$50 apiece to attend the luncheon meeting.

Bedrock of Support

They represented a bedrock of support for the President at a time when public opinion polls indicate that most Americans have lost confidence in him.

As Mr. Nixon looked on in the ballroom of the Shoreham Hotel, the participants showed their approval of a resolution, read by Rabbi Baruch Korff of Providence, R.I., who is president of the committee, reaffirming "our faith in God and country, in constitutional government, in the Presidency and in our beloved President who is one of the strongest links in the chain of the Presidency."

The resolution also charged "collusion between some members of Congress and vested interests" to aid and abet "the

impeachment syndrome within the House Judiciary Committee." It charged that the news media had engendered a "cli-

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mate of hysteria" in a "massive attempt to reverse the overwhelming mandate given the President by the people of the United States."

All the speakers, including Mr. Nixon, assailed the news media, and each attack was greeted by roars of approval as the participants shook their fists and shouted imprecations at reporters and cameramen in a roped-off area.

Othel Brand, a Texas farmer who is general chairman of the national citizens' committee, said that its membership numbered more than two million and that about \$1-million had been collected in 11 months. Mr. Brand said that the group's major "targets" were "the 38 members of the House Judiciary Committee," which is now inquiring into possible impeachment of Mr. Nixon. The gathering applauded thunderously.

President Nixon did not mention impeachment or Watergate in his short speech. He indicated that attacks on him weakened the Presidency and thus harmed prospects for achieving his goal of world peace.

Building on the Progress

Referring briefly to his forthcoming trip to the Middle East, he said that "all of the problems will not be solved," but that he planned to "build on the progress we have already made."

Then he went on to say that "a strong American Presidency is essential if we are to have peace in the world."

Mrs. Nixon and the Nixon's two daughters, Mrs. Edward F. Cox and Mrs. David Eisenhower, were honored at the luncheon. Mrs. Nixon remained silent as she accepted her honor, but both daughters spoke up in support of their father.

Mrs. Cox, whose blond hair was shoulder length and who was clad in a yellow dress, said that her father would be in office "955 more days," until his term is scheduled to expire on Jan. 20, 1977. Mrs. Eisenhower, who wore a green and white striped dress, declared that her father "loves you and he loves this country."

The chief speaker was Senator Carl T. Curtis, Republican of Nebraska, who assailed critics of the President as the "get-Nixon crowd."

Roar and Yells

When Senator Curtis scored those who would conduct "a trial by press" of the President, the crowd responded with a deep guttural roar interspersed with yells and gestures at the reporters.

Calling for an end to the

character "assassination of public officials," Mr. Curtis asserted that "lynching hasn't stopped in the United States; it's just that different people are doing it."

He said that the Watergate grand jury in the District of Columbia (most of whom are blacks) "can hardly be considered a cross section of the country."

He also criticizes the former Watergate special prosecutor, Archibald Cox, and members of the special prosecutor's staff, who he said were political partisans and could not be fair.

The audience roared, applauded and waved small American flags with almost every sentence. The great majority appeared to be at least middle-aged. Many of them were from smaller towns or cities. They crowded Nixons for autographs and



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Mrs. Richard M. Nixon at meeting in Washington yesterday honoring the President.

taking pictures of the First Family.

One elderly woman from Tennessee commented, "I haven't been in a crowd this big since President Harding's inaugural."

After the guests of honor were seated at the dais but before the President arrived, a short, plump middle-aged woman advanced on the press section and asked why the television cameras were not taking any pictures. "What is this—a conspiracy?" she asked.

The woman, who identified herself as Mrs. Dorothy Snyder of Akron, Ohio, a housewife married to a small-business man, suggested to an interview-

er that the attacks on the President were the result of "Communist organizations infiltrating the colleges."

"They are brainwashing the students and some of the students are going into the newspapers and in Congress," she said.

Like many of the people interviewed at the meeting, Mrs. Snyder conceded that the President may have done some things that were not proper, but insisted they had been blown out of proportion.

"He hasn't done anything any other President hasn't done for the past 20 years," she said.

Those Without Sin

Miss Harriet L. Valetiner of Cincinnati, who retired after 40 years of teaching slow children, told an interviewer that she was "a direct descendant of John Alden and Priscilla Mullens and a life member of the Mayflower Society."

She said that her reason for coming to the meeting was summed up by the expression, "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." She said most Republicans these days "don't have the guts" to defend Mr. Nixon and that her ancestors would be ashamed of them.

Mrs. Ruth H. Rose, a gray-haired artist from Richmond, said she was supporting the President because "I am loyal to the death."

Mrs. Rose said that the President had done "some wrong things" and added, "That's probably all you'll write in the paper—that a delegate says the

President has done some wrong things." She also said she thought that Mr. Nixon "has done a good job as President."

Paul F. Powers, who is chairman of the Republican Committee in Waltham, Mass., said he had come to the meeting because "like all Americans who care about their country, I feel very strongly that the President has been unfairly treated."

Mr. Powers, a lawyer, complained that not enough attention was being paid "to the great achievements of President Nixon." His wife, standing next to him, put in that "I don't want The New York Times or Boston Globe doing my voting for me."

Blames Communists

Mrs. Rose Ramquist of Bellevue, Wash., insisted that the whole Watergate affair had been instigated by "the Communists" who, she said, "want to get our minds off our own business." Mrs. Ramquist, whose husband is a physician, said she felt that by coming to the citizen's congress she was "fighting communism."

As for President Nixon, "he is standing firm for what he should stand for, and I am standing firm, too," she said.



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President Nixon waving to supporters in Washington yesterday. Rabbi Baruch Korff, head of supporters' group, is at left. Edward F. Cox, son-in-law, is at right.