

A Mixed Reaction On the Hill

IN RECENT weeks Senators and Representatives had complained that the trauma of Watergate had virtually brought legislative action to a halt. Thus most of them rejoiced in President Nixon's shakeup of his cabinet and White House staff.

The ousting of Presidential aides H. R. Haldeman, White House chief-of-staff, and chief of domestic affairs John Ehrlichman, brought undisguised delight to most legislators.

Percy's Resolution

Senator Charles Percy (R-Ill.) said he agreed with Mr. Nixon that it was time to leave preoccupation with Watergate and "get on with the important task of governing. (But) let us remember that we cannot govern unless we have the support of the people."

Therefore, he told a handful of colleagues on the Senate floor, "Now that the

President has spoken I remain convinced that the introduction of this resolution is appropriate. A simple and very basic question is at issue: Should the executive branch investigate itself? I do not think so."

The resolution, voted unanimously, was co-sponsored by such Republican stalwarts as Senators Barry Goldwater of Arizona, Robert J. Dole of Kansas (the former National Republican Committee chairman), and Richard Schweiker of Pennsylvania. It called for appointment of an outside prosecutor of unchallenged high repute and for Senate approval of him.

'Undermining Stopped'

While Democrats were hardly lavish in their praise of the President's speech, Senate Democratic leader Mike Mansfield of Montana said that before the President acted "the American system was being undermined" but now "the undermining has been stopped."

GOP House leader Gerald Ford of Michigan called the President's move "a most courageous act." And Senator George McGovern, the defeated 1972 Democratic presidential candidate told the American Society of Newspaper Editors, "Like all of you, I hope he (Mr. Nixon) was not involved. He denies that he was — and I, for one, must believe him . . . It is not easy for a President to admit a mistake . . .

"(However) the Watergate scandal is not, as the President implied, typical of the political process . . . Watergate is worse than the tactics of any national campaign in my memory of modern years . . . I emphatically reject the notion that I or my colleagues or my party in the presidential election condoned or would have countenanced activities of a criminal nature."