

Washington Wives To Boost Nixon

By Vera Glaser

Washington

A small but fierce effort to support President Richard Nixon has been launched by a group of top officials' wives.

Whether it can stem any of the impetus toward impeachment is questionable. It is worth reporting because — unlike some manufactured "back Nixon" explosions — this one, the women insist, is spontaneous and personally funded.

They have chipped in \$1 each to cover the mailing of meeting notices, as they gear up to grapple with the kickback from the Watergate scandals.

"It started at our house," said Mrs. George Shultz, wife of the Treasury secretary, who wouldn't confirm or deny reports that her husband will resign soon.

A motherly woman who does her own housework and serves Shultz breakfast in bed, she declared indignantly, "Anyone who has used a tape recorder knows something is always going wrong with them."

Mrs. Shultz and about 30 other wives of Cabinet, sub-Cabinet and agency officials are selling "Get Off His Back" bumper stickers, writing letters, trying to line up radio and TV dates, and angling for speaking spots at conventions.

The idea is to strike an upbeat now by emphasizing Nixon's achievements.

Although some administration insiders are known to be unhappy about the President's behavior in the Watergate affair, the women questioned were all gung-ho in his defense.

"There's more compassion per square head in this administration than among all those pointy-headed intellectuals," said Mrs. Herbert Stein, wife of the chairman



MRS. GEORGE SHULTZ
Kickoff at her house

of President Nixon's Council of Economic Advisers. "His accomplishments are being ignored. It's horrendous. They're trying to cripple Nixon, then say he 'can't govern.'"

Mrs. Stein recently went on TV with Mrs. William Simon, wife of the energy czar. Mrs. Simon has shunned personal publicity, but apparently regarded the TV session as important enough to make an exception.

Mrs. Stein recalled that a policeman stopped her for weaving in and out of lanes in her rush to the TV station. Flustered, she explained she was en route to defend Nixon.

The officer replied, "If you're going to defend the President, you'd better get moving."

The incident, as she views it, reveals the kind of grass roots support that should be nurtured.

Mrs. Roy Ash, whose husband heads the vast Office of Management and Budget, inscribed "Support the President" on every one of her

Christmas cards, bills and letters. The other women have taken it up.

Following the kickoff at the Shultzes, the women have met in the homes of Commerce Secretary Frederick Dent and presidential assistant Peter Flanigan, where each was given a roster of Nixon achievements.

Among other things, it lists ending the Vietnam War and the draft, opening relations with China, and detente with Russia.

"These are things the ultra-liberals can't forgive our President for," snapped Mrs. Caspar Weinberger, wife of the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare.

"They are crucifying him, not for what has gone amiss, but for accomplishing what they wanted to and couldn't."

At the last meeting Mrs. Weinberger gave a pep talk.

"You can give a serious speech to an audience of 300 people," she told the women, "and when the questions begin, the first thing they ask is, 'Have you met Henry Kissinger?' The next is, 'What happened to Martha?'"

Mrs. Rogers Morton, wife of the Interior secretary, described herself as one of the few in the group not terrified of television. She is "on standby" for talk shows and speeches.

The Nixons were said to have expressed their thanks in a "warm, affectionate" phone call to Brigid Flanigan. (Mrs. Flanigan was unavailable for details because she was "off fox-hunting" for the day.)

To buck up the women, Mrs. Weinberger told them, "If anyone here is timid, look at me. I'm the kind of person who wouldn't get up at a PTA meeting.

"But," she asserted, "these are not ordinary circumstances."