

Romney Backs Hickel Stand on Youth

By H. ERICH HEINEMANN

George Romney, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, supported Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel yesterday in his criticism of the Nixon Administration's attitude toward the nation's youth.

Mr. Romney, a former Governor of Michigan and one-time candidate for the Republican Presidential nomination, said that "I think that Secretary Hickel rendered a real service in the letter that he wrote, and I'm pleased that the President recognized that he had made a sound suggestion, and acted promptly."

When Mr. Hickel's letter to the President was made public last Wednesday, there were indications that other members of the Cabinet supported Mr. Hickel's position, but Mr. Romney's statement yesterday at a news conference at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel here was his first public endorsement by another Cabinet member.

Departs from Text

Mr. Romney was in New York to address a meeting of savings bankers on the housing crisis, but he largely discarded his prepared text for a political talk that departed sharply from Administration policy on a number of points.

Congress over credit should be considered, Mr. Romney said, as a way to get adequate

funds into housing. The Democratic Congress gave the Administration standby authority for credit controls last December, but President Nixon has rejected such controls at least in part on the ground that they would create more problems than they would solve.

Secretary Romney was asked at his news conference why the President had not introduced wage and price controls to help curb inflation. The Secretary, who is a former chairman of the American Motors Corporation, replied that Mr. Nixon "was more impressed with is economists than he was with some of the rest of us."

Criticizes Vietnam War

In his formal address to the Golden Anniversary Conference of the National Association of Mutual Savings Banks, Mr. Romney devoted at least half of his speech to a bitter attack on the Vietnam war, which he called "the most tragic foreign policy mistake in the nation's history."

Not only had the nation become involved where it should not have been, he said, "but we did it under circumstances that I hope we never permit to develop again." He added:

"I do not believe that a free nation, a democratic society, can successfully engage in foreign military operations, except when responding to at-

tack, without following constitutional processes."

"We did not have a national dialogue," Mr. Romney continued. "We did not have proper Congressional consideration." By our mistakes, he said, "we helped create the very conditions that we assumed existed at the time we became involved, but that did not exist."

The Secretary defended President Nixon's decision to send American troops into Cambodia however, saying that it was a "tactical move, designed to shorten the war rather than lengthen it. And he rejected any decision "to just pull out" as the "worst mistake of all," contending that it would expose the people of South Vietnam to retaliation by the Hanoi Government.

Discussing housing problems, Secretary Romney said the nation was "rapidly approaching the Rubicon" on the question of whether the housing industry would be "socialized" or whether private industry would continue to be allowed to do the job.

He said he was strongly in favor of the private enterprise route, but also indicated that Government actions were needed to insure success. He prodded his audience to increase its investment in mortgages, and especially in the National Corporation for Housing Partnerships, which he said needed to increase slightly over \$2-million by Friday to go into business.