

President's Peace Gesture to Press

WASHINGTON — (AP) — President Nixon followed up his televised Watergate speech last night by extending an olive branch to the press.

Without advance notice, Nixon showed up in the White House press briefing room and stepped behind a rostrum whose microphones were dead.

He told newsmen he had had his differences with them in the past, then added:

"Just continue to give me hell when you think I'm wrong.

"I hope I'm worthy of your trust."

Walked Out

With that, the President walked from the room.

In his speech, the President had given a "vigorous free press" part of the credit for exposing the Watergate scandal. U.S. District Judge John Sirica, who tried seven Watergate conspirators also was cited.

Nixon has not always made conciliatory gestures toward the press.

Contrast

At his now famous news conference following an unsuccessful gubernatorial race in California in 1962, Nixon said, "You won't have Dick Nixon to kick around any more."

Nixon's comments last night contrasted sharply with the earlier position taken by Ronald Ziegler, his press secretary.

Only two weeks ago, Ziegler refused to apologize to a newspaper that had helped uncover the conspiracy, saying his past attacks would "stand the test of time."

In what was perhaps his most heated public attack in the Watergate case, Ziegler said, "This is a political effort by The Washington Post, well conceived and coordinated, with the aim of discrediting this administration."

'Secret Fund'

At that time he was referring to a story that said the federal grand jury had been told that White House Chief of Staff H. R. Haldeman, who resigned yesterday, was one of five men authorized to draw on a secret Nixon fund used for political spying and sabotage.

During the presidential campaign, Ziegler attacked the Post on several occasions, accusing the newspaper of "character assassination" and "a vicious abuse of the journalistic process."

In his address, Nixon said Ziegler, like himself, had been acting on the basis of what later was shown to be inaccurate information.