

Families of POWs Split Over Policy

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — Relatives of American prisoners of war split sharply and emotionally yesterday over the Nixon Administration's Vietnam policy, pointedly underscoring their differences by speculating on how their men reacted to the recent bombing of Hanoi.

"He would have stood up and cheered," declared Mrs. James B. Stockdale, arousing cheers from families of other POW's and men missing in action.

"I hope he's alive," murmured Mrs. James L. Hughes, winning the vocal agreement of others among an audience of about 300 relatives.

Mrs. Stockdale, of Coronado (San Diego County), and Mrs. Hughes, of Santa Fe, N.M., expressed some of the deep-felt views — and frustrations — evident at a special meeting of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia.

Mrs. Stockdale, the league founder, is the wife of a Navy captain who has been held by North Vietnam since September, 1969. Mrs. Hughes' husband, an Air Force colonel, has been a North Vietnamese captive since May, 1967.

The organization, largest

of its kind, gathered for the weekend in a Virginia motel across the Potomac River from Washington "to evaluate the progress made by the Nixon Administration" in freeing the prisoners and to decide how or whether the league should move in the 1972 election year.

League members are to vote today on any resolutions proposed. Regardless of whether the league finally takes a formal position, some of its members who are critical of administration policy plan to deliver a letter for President Nixon today at the White House gates.

League activists want to abandon the organization's present "humanitarian" stance and plunge into open political criticism of the administration, which they claim has occasionally received tacit support from the supposedly "neutral" league.

Although virtually all of the league's 2700 members can be assumed to be unhappy with lack of progress in gaining the POWs' freedom, their divergent assessments of who is to blame and what to do about it was illustrated in a symposium entitled, "Where do we go from here?"