

They 'Kept the Faith'

Nixon Hails POWs, Kin

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — President Nixon Tuesday hailed the courage of the American prisoners of war and paid tribute to the women behind them "who kept the faith."

Nixon made his remarks at the airport after he arrived in Columbia to address a joint session of the South Carolina legislature, one of a number that passed resolutions applauding his strategy for ending the Vietnam war.

Nixon was the first president to address the South Carolina Legislature in its 300-year history. He was introduced to the lawmakers by Democratic Gov. John West as a "man of peace." West told the President South Carolina will continue to be a part "of the new stability which you are creating in this world."

Scores of state highway patrolmen, city policemen and Secret Service agents were posted in and around the Statehouse for the presidential visit.

A crowd estimated at about 3,000 greeted Nixon at the airport. Mrs. Robert Bagley, whose husband is a POW not yet returned, presented Nixon a plaque on behalf of South Carolina POWs in appreciation for his concern for the men.

into his limousine to begin the seven mile motorcade to the state Capitol. Along the way, he stood in the back of the open car, waving and smiling to crowds.

The crowds ranged from clumps of three or four to thicker throngs lining the highway. Some waved flags and others held signs including one hand lettered placard reading "Thanks for our POWs."

Nixon stopped off in Columbia en route back to Washington from his Key Biscayne, Fla., home.

The President, who flew to Florida Friday, found several earlier opportunities during the holiday weekend to talk about the prisoners and the war's end.

Visiting the site of the annual Jackie Gleason Pro-Am golf tournament near Ft. Lauderdale Monday, he said the prisoners could come home "with their heads high" because, in his words, the

United States achieved its objective of preventing forced imposition of a Communist government on South Vietnam.

Responding to a reporter's question about a presidential meeting earlier in the day with the AFL-CIO executive council in Miami, Nixon said:

"... During the difficult periods when we have attempted to bring the war in Vietnam to a conclusion in the right way, in a way that our POWs could come off those planes with their heads high, knowing that they had not fought in vain, knowing that peace could not have been achieved had it not been for the support of millions of Americans, and particularly... had it not been for the steadfast, outspoken support of most of the leaders of organized labor."

At another point, Nixon spoke of the backing of AFL-CIO President George Meany and others as having been indispensable.