

Nixon's POW Party

BARGAINING

His forceful remarks on government confidentiality repeatedly returned to the theme that world peace is dependent on U.S. bargaining strength, and the nation's bargaining strength, in turn, is dependent on government officials who are responsible for keeping secrets.

Mr. Nixon traced the government's role in maintaining secrecy throughout the sensitive stages of the Vietnam war and in preliminary talks with China and the Soviet Union, and he added, "Had we not had that kind of secrecy . . . you men would still be in Hanoi."

The returned prisoners, who with their wives later attended a gala banquet at the White House, applauded warmly in response to the remarks about national security.

When Mr. Nixon referred obliquely to the publication of the Pentagon Papers in a sharply critical vein, the ex-POWs rose spontaneously and cheered loudly for nearly a minute.

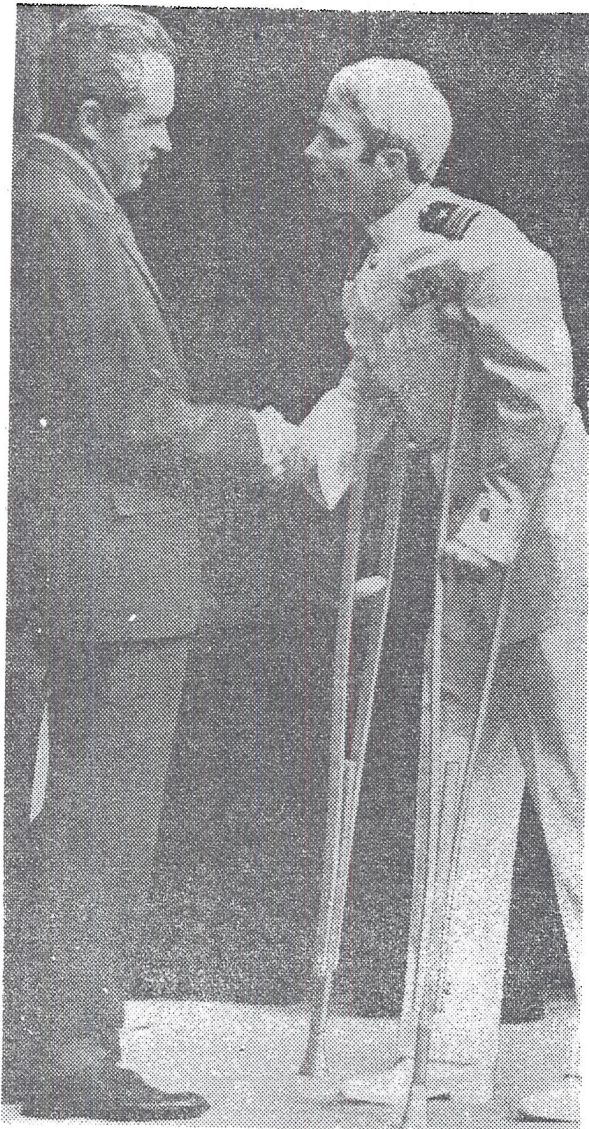
"We must have confidentiality. We must have secret communications," Mr. Nixon said.

Addressing himself to "everybody in the bureaucracy," Mr. Nixon urged, "if a document is classified, keep it classified."

MOVED

The former prisoners, some of them still on crutches or hobbling in casts, appeared moved when Mr. Nixon recalled that prior to the peace agreement, he had been admonished: "Bring them home, but bring them home on their feet and not on their knees."

"I can say to you, this is the most distinguished group



UPI Telephoto

PRESIDENT NIXON AND JOHN McCAIN
The Navy commander arrived on crutches

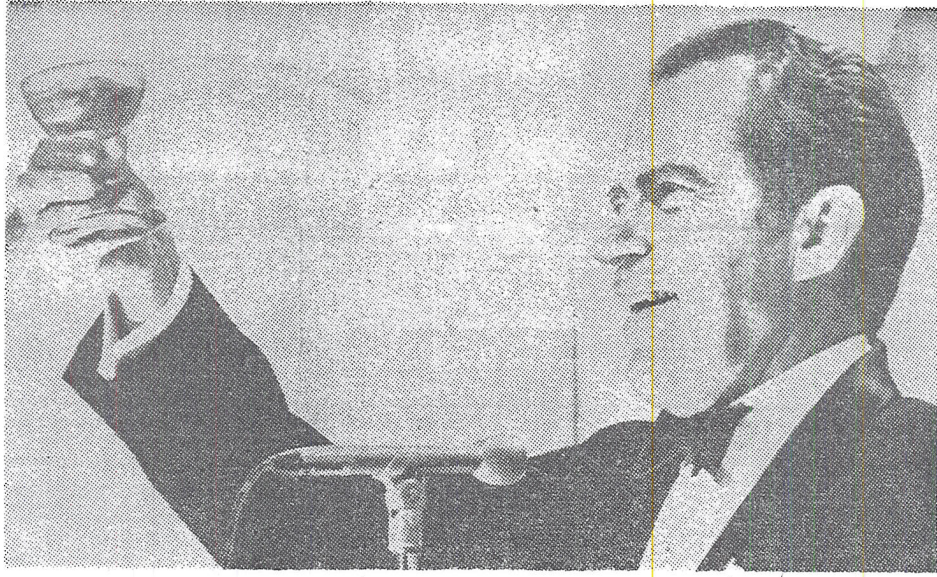
A Blast At News Leaks

Washington

President Nixon denounced the sources of government news leaks yesterday and challenged the federal bureaucracy to adopt a "new sense of responsibility and dedication" in protecting national secrets.

"I think it is time in the country to quit making national heroes of those who steal secrets and publish them in newspapers," Mr. Nixon told an appreciative audience of nearly 600 returned American prisoners of war.

The President's comments in a State Department "briefing" of the returned POWs did not include any reference to a special White House task force he created to stop news leaks known as "the plumbers." The task force is under investigation for alleged illegal domestic surveillance activities.



UPI Telephoto

The President toasted the former prisoners and their guests

I've ever addressed, and I've never been prouder of any group," the President declared.

Before and after his "well done" address in the State Department auditorium, Mr. Nixon acknowledged the cheering ex-prisoners by flashing a "V" sign and the traditional "thumbs up" aviation signal. Most of the men are Navy or Air Force pilots.

WOMEN

While the presidential briefing was going on, Pat Nixon and Judy Agnew hosted a reception for the wives and dates of the POWs on the eighth floor of the State Department.

Earlier in the day, the ex-POWs and their guests attended a Bloody Marys-and-breakfast gathering hosted by the Hilton Hotel

Corp. and the Washington Hilton.

For many, the occasion was the first stateside reunion since the prisoners' repatriation four months ago.

ENTERTAINMENT

The main event of the round of celebrations was the red, white and blue banquet and entertainment show last night on the South Lawn of the White House.

Billed by White House officials as "the biggest sit-down dinner" ever held at the executive mansion, the affair was an unabashedly patriotic show featuring Hollywood celebrities, more than 200 bottles of champagne and a huge red and yellow striped tent larger even than the main portion of the White House itself.

The tent was erected several weeks ago for the nearly 1300 guests. About 200 extra waiters were hired and a local caterer provided much of the dinnerware.

The menu — with distinctly American fare — included roast beef, cornsticks, potatoes, vegetables and strawberry mousse.

The wines were from California.

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