

# Weinberger: 'I Trust the President'

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You could almost feel the tension as HEW Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger faced a forest of news microphones in a room at San Francisco's Civic Auditorium shortly before President Nixon went on the air at the White House last night.

Weinberger, always calm, always polite, greeted 20 reporters gathered around him and one with a booming voice abruptly broke the tension.

The newsman wanted to know if Weinberger still regarded the Watergate scandal as an "ephemeral thing," something that is temporary and of passing significance — as the secretary had said it was in Los Angeles last Saturday night.

## 'Not of Consequence'

"No, I don't think that can be said any longer," said Weinberger. "But I still think that when the history of this (Nixon) Administration is drawn, it will not be a matter of consequence."

The questions came thick and fast. What did Weinberger think of the resignations of his White House friends and associates: Attorney General Richard Kleindienst, White House aides H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman and John Dean III?

"I was pretty certain there would have to be some resignations; the President saw it (Watergate) was hurting our status in the world," Weinberger responded.

Had he talked with the President; did he know what the President would say in his talk to the nation?

"No, I have not; I don't know what he will say."

## 'Public Confidence'

But Weinberger added that he was confident the President would restore "public confidence" in the government.

You feel the President can do this?

"Yes, I do. I trust him completely."

The restoration of public confidence in government seemed to be the uppermost thought in Weinberger's mind. He said several times that public confidence must be restored so that the government can get on with the business of running the country.

Weinberger denied that he had any ambition to run for governor of California or any other public office in his home state.

"I intend to stay in my po-

sition," he said. "I have no intention or plan to run for anything. I've been so busy I haven't had time to think of anything else.

## 'Enormous Job'

"I've been continuously on the business of government, and that business is proceeding, you know. It is an enormous job, a very big task. I am giving my whole energies to this juggernaut (HEW) going down hill and trying to catch up with it."

Weinberger said he doesn't see why the Watergate scandal should damage the Republican party or its candidates for office.

The secretary called Watergate "a painful episode," but added that he does not think it has affected the "competence of government."

Weinberger went to Civic Auditorium to address a convention of the Western Association of Hospitals. Science writers who generally cover such events were outnumbered at the news conference by newsmen who customarily leave the coverage to the science writers.