

It's No Scandal To the Tourists

Washington

The lines of visitors waiting to tour the White House were as long as usual for a balmy May morning.

Checking their cameras and adjusting their sunglasses, schoolchildren, retirees and middle-aged vacationers through the President's residence.

As far as the Watergate conspiracy and the alleged involvement in it by some high White House officials were concerned the visitors, for the most part, couldn't have cared less.

"You came to see the White House, not the people in it," said Marilyn Schneider, a young housewife from St. Paul.

"Politicians are all crooks, anyway," her husband, Paul, a Navy radio operator, said.

Despite solemn warnings from politicians and political analysts, Schneider did not think the institution of the Presidency has been affected at all by Watergate.

"I don't think any less of President Nixon," he said.

"Like they say, all's fair in love and war. This time they just got caught, that's all."

HOUSEWIFE

A few yards down the line, a housewife from Wausau, Wis., Mrs. Robert Jones, complained that the Watergate issue "has been blown all out of proportion."

"I was talking to a Democrat from Texas, and he said this stuff has been going on for years," she declared. "Everybody's been doing it, in both parties, so what's the big deal?"

It was a typical crowd for this time of year, according

to a National Parks policeman, a veteran of the daily tour. It was composed mainly of older people with leisure and money to spend, and schoolchildren on an educational jaunt.

"These are prosperous people," the policeman said. "They're not concerned with political scandals."

Suddenly the sound of drums burst out of a White House loudspeaker, followed by a band playing "America the Beautiful" and a recorded speech about the tour.

"And remember," a woman's voice recited, "even by passing though, you become a part of its history — and that's the real excitement of the White House."

"Isn't that wonderful?" a grandmotherly woman said, nodding a headful of freshly set gray fingerwaves.

SYMPATHY

"VIP visitors," those who go to the extra step of asking their congressman or a government official to make arrangements for them, are given a separate tour.

One of these, who described himself as "an independent businessman" from Cincinnati, said Watergate made no difference at all in how he felt about politics and government. "I'm in sympathy with the problems of the Presidency," he said.

Another, Ernie Wilbanks, of the Long Beach Chamber of Commerce, thought "It just proves that we're all human, including the President."

"I think in the end it's going to be productive, that Congress is going to be forced to pass legislation to control campaign funds."

said one mother who was helping to chaperon a group of 40 fifth- and sixth-graders from Pleasantville Middle School in Westchester County, N.Y.

N.Y. Times Service