

Senate Blast At Stories About Nixon

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News stories suggesting without proof that President Nixon was implicated in the Watergate scandal were denounced on the Senate floor yesterday as "demagoguery" and "McCarthyism at its worst."

Senator William Proxmire (Dem - Wis.), a persistent critic of the President, criticized the press in a speech that was seconded by such diverse figures as Senate Republican leader Hugh Scott and Senate Democratic whip Robert C. Byrd.

"President Nixon is being tried, sentenced and executed by rumor and allegation," Proxmire said, referring to published reports of former White House counsel John W. Dean's charge that

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Mr. Nixon was directly involved in a Watergate cover-up.

"As the Senator who succeeded Joe McCarthy in the United States Senate, I find this kind of persecution and condemnation without trial McCarthyism at its worst," he said.

"Doesn't the President have the same simple right that every other American has, to be innocent until proven guilty?"

McCarthy, the late Republican Senator from Wisconsin, was censured by the Senate for contempt after he led a lengthy campaign in the early 1950s against alleged Communist subversion and espionage at high levels of the government.

Scott, speaking of the press, said: "When they ride momentum and decide to turn a whisper into a charge, a rumor into a fact, a wrongful deed by one person into a wrongful deed by another . . . that's demagoguery."

The GOP leader said the American people are being scared and shaken needlessly. "They read in the papers that somebody said something terrible about the President . . . There is no time to tell the people, look, the President didn't do this, there's no proof."

Senate Democratic leader Mike Mansfield said, "Rumors and innuendo flourish and take hold," and only the jury system and the select Senate committee should determine guilt or innocence in the Watergate case.

Proxmire noted his past disagreements with Mr. Nixon, from the "reprehensible nature" of his early campaigns for Congress to his "ruthless orders" for U.S. bombings of North Vietnam and Cambodia.