

Reaction Mixed—and Unhappy—to Watergate

The nation's Republican governors, apprehensive that it might appear they were ducking on the Watergate case at their spring conference in New York, yesterday issued a short, mild statement saying they "deplore Watergate" and "support (and) believe the President."

The statement, a reversal of a decision two nights ago against issuing any collective comment on the matter, was drafted and unanimously approved after private discussion of about 40 minutes at the North Tarrytown home of host Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller of New York.

In Washington, Rep. Henry S. Reuss (D-Wis.) said that

President Nixon and Vice President Spiro T. Agnew "should consider resigning for the good of the country," paving the way for a "coalition government" under House Speaker Carl Albert (D-Okla.).

According to sources at the meeting, the GOP governors went ahead with the message in the face of advice from Kenneth R. Cole, Mr. Nixon's new head of the Domestic Council, that it might be better if they didn't because such action might suggest White House pressure for a statement of support.

Cole's advice was sought by phone, these sources said, after one governor expressed concern that the press might well see a pro-Nixon

statement as the result of White House pressure.

Cole said he agreed, but that the decision was the governors' to make, the sources said.

They went ahead finally, sources at the meeting said, because Govs. Rockefeller and Linwood Holton (R-Va.), conference chairman, feared that in a closing press conference their own responses to questions about Watergate might be taken as the consensus of all the governors.

The statement, written mainly by Rockefeller, Holton and Gov. Thomas J. Meskill (R-Conn.), said:

"We have confidence in the future of our country. We deplore Watergate. We support the President. We

believe the President. We feel he has achieved major accomplishments for our country. We will do whatever we can to help meet the vital needs of our country."

Just back from a meeting of the European parliament in Strasbourg, France, Reuss said in a radio interview, "Europeans cannot understand how America can limp along with a fractured presidency for the next 44 months."

"The plain fact," said the congressman, in some of the strongest language yet from the Capitol on the Watergate case, "is that Mr. Nixon, whatever his involvement in the Watergate, has presided over a corrupt government. The plain fact is that he has waited an un-

conscionably long time to do anything about it. A third plain fact is that he has forfeited public confidence."

Since Mr. Nixon "has accepted full responsibility," Reuss said, he should consider stepping down, and so, "as a member of that administration," should Agnew, "though there is no suggestion of his implication in the Watergate."

Albert would then automatically become President; the Speaker of the House is third in line.

Reuss said Albert, in those circumstances, should appoint Republicans to "roughly one half" of the Cabinet positions to create "a truly bipartisan government" until 1976.