

Weinberger Calls for Reforms

By Keith Power

Secretary of Health Education and Welfare Caspar W. Weinberger said here yesterday that out of the scandal of Watergate must come profound electoral reform, particularly in the area of campaign financing.

"We must prevent this kind of corruption of the election process . . . these tragic, tawdry and disgusting incidents . . . from ever happening again," he said.

Weinberger was addressing a hometown, non-partisan audience of about 400 at a luncheon in the Fairmont Hotel to benefit the Guardsman campership program.

Weinberger's public attitude toward the Watergate debacle has been drastically revised from the day in late April when he dismissed the case as "essentially ephemeral."

Yesterday, he conceded in an interview after the speech that his April remark was "silly — I shouldn't have commented on something I didn't know anything about; I broke a long standing personal rule."

The secretary confronted the Watergate issue head-on in his speech, likening the criminal activities and attitudes exposed by Watergate investigators to "a cancer which must be cut out and excised from the American system."

He said the highest national priority should be given to reforming the electoral process, particularly in the area of campaign financing where a "sharp limitation" may have to be placed on contributions to individual candidates.

However, he said the "real scandal" of Watergate will occur if critics use the issue to challenge and change the basic domestic policies of the Nixon administration.