

# G.O.P. CHIEFS GIVE NIXON AN OVATION

22 Congressmen Back Him  
—Poll Shows His Support  
at 45%, a Low Point

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WASHINGTON, May 23— President Nixon received a standing ovation from 22 Republican Senators and Representatives today after he again invoked the name of national security in connection with the Watergate case.

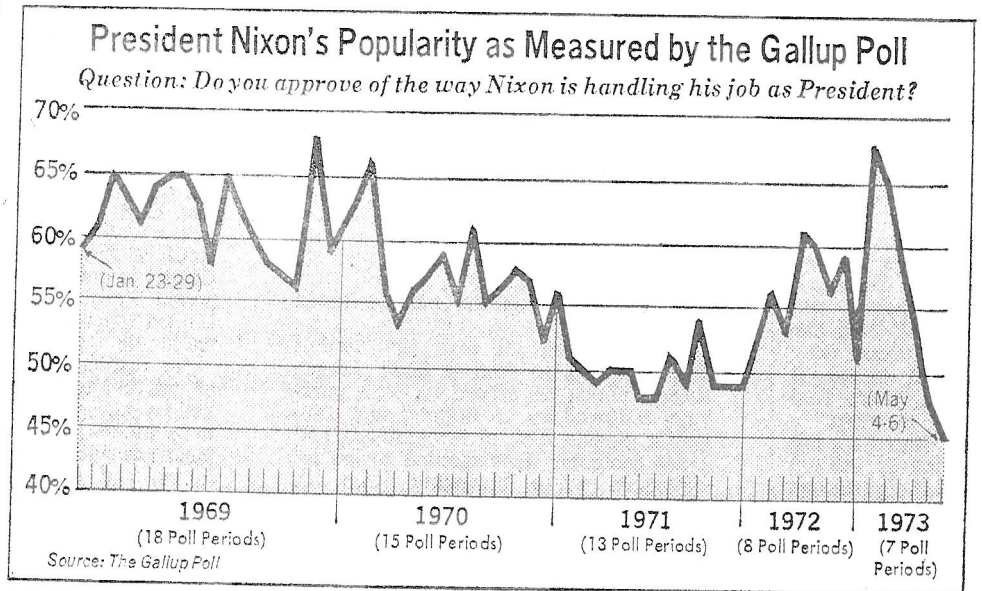
Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, the Senate minority leader,

Excerpts from the Ziegler, Garment briefing, Page 35.

conveyed the President's remarks to reporters as the Republican leaders rallied around the President and echoed his latest defense — that White House efforts to conceal some aspects of the Watergate case stemmed from the President's legitimate concerns about security leaks and exposing covert intelligence operations.

The harmonious meeting in the President's office this morning came as the Gallup Poll showed that Mr. Nixon's popularity had dropped to the lowest point since he has been President. The poll, taken shortly after the President's April 30 television address on Water-

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gate, showed that 45 per cent of those questioned had said they approved of the way Mr. Nixon was handling his job. On Feb. 19 his rating was 65 per cent.

Today's White House gathering was a regular Republican leadership meeting with the President except that it had been expanded to include more members of Congress, George Bush, the Republican National Chairman, and two Cabinet members—Secretary of Agriculture Earl L. Butz and Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton.

Most of the two-hour meeting dealt with legislation before Congress. Senator Scott, asked if the Watergate case was discussed replied:

"I will read you the exact notes on it, and this is all that was said by anybody. The President: 'Our negotiations with the P.R.C. (People's Republic of China) and the U.S.S.R. were highly secret and they are now. Leaking of information imperils negotiations, and we have to continue measures to ensure the secrecy.' He then said he would appreciate our support, and he left to a standing ovation of all persons present."

In a 4,000-word statement released yesterday, the President conceded that there had been "wide-ranging efforts" in the White House to conceal wrongdoing in the political espionage of last year's Presidential election but that those actions stemmed from his instructions not to let the Watergate investigation interfere with national security matters.

### 'Full Confidence' Voiced

"I have full confidence in the President," said Senator Scott, who had been reported unhappy with Mr. Nixon's handling of the case in the past.

"I am satisfied he told the truth to the best of his honest recollection. And I hope that the President of the United States will receive the same credence that is sometimes given to thieves who purloin documents." The Senator indicated he was referring to John W. Dean 3d, the ousted White House counsel who is seeking immunity for his testimony in the case.

Other Republican leaders supported the President in the same manner. Vice President Agnew, speaking in Orlando, Fla., said the President had been forced to "weather an incredible storm of personal abuse and innuendo" from persons who were not aware that national security was at stake.

Senator Jacob K. Javits, Re-

publican of New York, defended the President on other grounds. He said many Europeans had feared that the Watergate scandal might imperil the President's ability to negotiate with foreign governments. "The question in Europe is, 'Can he deliver?'" Mr. Javits told a news conference. "That's where Congress weighs in. Congress has to make up its mind. It's either going to let him govern, or take some action against him. It just can't hobble him."

Mr. Nixon's statement, however, left unanswered many questions about White House involvement in the Watergate break-in and its aftermath, questions that Leonard Garment, the new White House counsel, and Ronald L. Ziegler, the press secretary, could not answer in long, fractious sessions with reporters last night and this morning.

One recurring question was whether President Nixon lifted his order not to let the Watergate investigation expose covert intelligence operations run by the Central Intelligence Agency and a White House special unit after it was learned by investigators that there was no connection between national security activities and the Watergate matter.

Mr. Garment did not answer that specific question, but he said that the President was still maintaining limitations on the Federal Bureau of Investigation to make sure its investigation of the Watergate case did not spill over into national security matters.

"There are limitations with respect to national security matters that still continue," Mr. Garment said. He gave one example: the top secret documents taken from the White House by Mr. Dean and now under court jurisdiction.

"There is an obvious continuing restriction on the documents that John Dean placed in the staff deposit box," he said. "Some might consider that germane to Watergate."

Those documents, described by the President in his statement, outlined Government plans, later dropped, to authorize burglary and other acts for national security in relation to domestic unrest.

It was not clear, either from the President's statements or from the question-and-answer sessions that followed the extent of activities that the White House considered legitimate for national security. Both Mr. Garment and Mr. Ziegler, however, insisted that no restrictions on the Watergate investigation by the White House was intended to interfere with the prosecution of illegal activities.