

Klein, in Final Talk, Sees Nixon Credibility Rising

Departing White House Communications Director Herbert G. Klein said yesterday that the mistakes made by Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler in his comments on the Watergate case were honest ones and should not be grounds for his replacement.

Klein, in a farewell press conference, said it would be "a serious mistake" to replace Ziegler, who yesterday was given broadened duties by Mr. Nixon and named a presidential assistant.

Ziegler, for nearly 11 months denied knowledge of involvement by White House officials in the Watergate espionage conspiracy. He said he acted on information furnished him by now-deposed White House officials.

Klein also said that Mr. Nixon had held too few press conferences but predicted that this will soon be corrected. He blamed Mr. Nixon's infrequent press conferences during his first term primarily on continuing secret negotiations with the Russians and the Chinese.

Klein is leaving the administration July 1 to become a vice-president for Los Angeles-based Metromedia, Inc., which operates WTTG (Channel 5) in Washington. But he said he is not

deserting a sinking Nixon administration.

"I wouldn't leave if I thought I was helping sink the ship," Klein said. "I think the ship is well afloat and moving forward. I have no doubt the President will emerge from this strongly. His credibility will rise."

Klein based his prediction that President Nixon would recover credibility chiefly

on what he said would be the administration's record in foreign affairs during the next three years.

While Klein said he had some reservations about news stories based on unidentified sources, he said that overall the press coverage of the Nixon administration had been both "fair and good."