

Fair Campaign Group Rejects Nixon's View

The Fair Campaign Practices Committee rejected yesterday what it termed President Nixon's implication that the Watergate scandal resulted from inadequate election-campaign laws.

The private, nonpartisan group said that while reform was needed, the Watergate affair did not indicate weaknesses in the present law.

"The President has implied the Watergate affair is largely the result of inadequacies in the law itself," the committee said in a statement filed with the Senate Rules subcommittee on elections.

"This implication confuses the issue, for the fact is that the Watergate involves conspiracy to break the law and conspiracy to obstruct justice," the committee said.

"The essential problem the Watergate dramatizes is not inadequate laws, but the breaking of laws and the conspiratorial thinking behind the law-breaking."

The committee, headed by Charles P. Taft, son of the 27th President, monitors campaign practices and investigates complaints of unfair tactics. It said congres-

sional committees already studying revision of election statutes could do a better job than the special commission Mr. Nixon has proposed creating.

"As a practical matter our government must move in a calm and orderly manner to address certain priority problems arising from the Watergate," the committee said. "Instead the President urges that Congress hasten to solve a vast and confusing array of problems in six months."

On May 16 the President called on Congress to create a 17-member nonpartisan commission to do "nothing less than a complete re-examination of our system of elections and campaign practices" and to recommend changes by Dec. 1. He suggested any changes he made effective by the start of the 1974 congressional campaign.

The committee suggested consideration of a law to make a federal candidate personally responsible for the conduct of his campaign and to unseat any official who is convicted after his election of engaging in illegal campaign practices.