

An Attack On Nixon 'Espionage'

Washington

The American Civil Liberties Union accused President Nixon yesterday of showing "a contemptuous disregard for constitutional freedoms" by sanctioning the widespread use of political espionage.

This charge was made in a 26-page position paper that dealt with a broad range of civil liberties questions raised by the Watergate scandals.

The ACLU statement asserted that "all of the methods of political espionage contemplated in the 1970 plan (excepting only mail covers...) were employed by the federal government during the past few years."

PLAN

The "plan" to which the ACLU referred was the presidentially approved domestic intelligence program for conducting break-ins, electronic surveillance, opening mail and monitoring international communications adopted in July, 1970. President Nixon said he rescinded the plan after five days because of the opposition of the late FBI Director, J. Edgar Hoover.

"The president's admission that he gave even temporary approval to these activities — and more permanent approval to wiretapping of news reporters and past and present members of the National Security Council for purposes of political intelligence — indicates a contemptuous disregard for constitutional freedoms," the ACLU statement asserted.

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The position paper took strong issue with the presidential defense that the White House had to engage in these activities in the name of national security.

—WIRETAPS

The civil liberties organization took sharp issue with the President's May 22 statement that national security wiretaps installed without court order to trace news leaks were "legal at the time." The ACLU report said "those taps were as illegal when they were installed as they are now."

Such taps were ruled unconstitutional in June, 1972. "The Supreme Court decision did not make such taps illegal," the statement held, "it merely confirmed that they were illegal."

The ACLU expanded on previously expressed com-

pains of the sentencing procedures of Watergate trial Judge John Sirica, who imposed stiff terms on the original seven defendants in the case as an inducement to give further testimony in the case.

"While Judge Sirica's interest in obtaining the full story is laudable, nevertheless the ACLU believes that the application of pressures, express or implied, upon a

convicted defendant facing sentencing raises serious civil liberties problems," the ACLU said.

Taking issue with the Nixon claim that national security considerations justified restricting the flow of information to the public, the ACLU specifically condemned efforts by the administration to enjoin the press from publishing the Pentagon papers.

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