

Positions on Watergate

Congress Split on Speech

Washington

Washington officials divided along party lines in assessing President Nixon's Watergate speech last evening, with Republicans mostly claiming it helped clear the air and Democrats contending it offered no new information about Mr. Nixon's role in the scandal.

Senator Howard Baker, of Tennessee, ranking Republican on the Senate Watergate investigating committee which drew heavy Nixon criticism, cautiously commented that any information Mr. Nixon could offer was welcome and would be used to help the panel write a "meaningful report."

But Democratic committee member Joseph M. Montoya, of New Mexico, said Mr. Nixon failed to inform the public about essential facts regarding his role and was wrong in trying to get the hearings ended.

"Watergate is symbolic of the threats to our electoral process, to our freedoms and is a cancer that has set in," Montoya said. "We must find out what caused it and come out of the hearings with remedial legislation."

GOLDWATER

Senator Barry Goldwater, (Rep-Ariz.) said, "in my opinion, the President did not add anything to his other speeches that would tend to

divert suspicion from him." He added that the crux of Mr. Nixon's speech was his appeal to Americans to focus on potentially dangerous situations other than Watergate.

"I stand behind him in his appeal for Americans to recognize existing and obvious dangers to our republic, to our economy and the good of the nation and the world," Goldwater said.

Senator Edmund Muskie (Dem-Maine) said, "I regret to say I am not impressed. I find it difficult to understand how a president could be so totally ignorant of the events involving the high officials in his administration whom he himself appointed."

IMPEACH

In Brookline, Mass., Representative Robert F. Drinan, who has filed a resolution in the House to impeach Mr. Nixon, said the speech would help the movement against the President, "because he has not answered the charges. He's trying to sweep it under the rug. But there was no new evidence tonight that will bring people toward him. I can't see that he's turned any corners."

Robert S. Strauss, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, vacationing in Del Mar, Calif., said "unhappily, I think the President's speech added nothing, and probably subtracted nothing from what we knew."

Republican National

Chairman George Bush called the speech "credible and very reasonable."

Representative Brock Adams of Washington, a liberal Democrat, called the President's speech "defensive" and said he was "trying to shut off Watergate." But Adams added: "I think he's going to be at least partially successful in it."

MAY

Another Democrat, Representative Thaddeus Dulski of New York, said the speech wasn't substantially different from the President's May 22 statement.

"But who am I to take the word of John Dean against that of the President?" Dulski said.

"He rang the bell tonight," said Representative Joe D. Waggoner Jr., a moderately conservative Louisiana Democrat. "He came through . . . In this part of the country the people are going to agree with him. The people say they've had enough of it. They say get it off that TV set and let's go on."

REAGAN

"The President has stated his case and has stated it well," Reagan said. "His message was the voice of reason which went a long way, I believe, toward putting the whole situation in better perspective and giving a clearer understanding

of how these things could have happened. I agree that the case should be decided in the courts where it belongs."

The reaction of Republican politicians in not-for-attribution statements was more muted. It might best be described as a sigh of relief.

One veteran Republican campaign organizer offered this evaluation:

"I think it was one of his better speeches. He always loses me at the end, gets a little flag - wavy and corny. But he wasn't so tense this time and he didn't praise (H.R.) Haldeman or (John) Ehrlichman. He showed a little more humility."

United Press