

Nixon Quizzed By Press --  
Lively Watergate Session

'I Shall  
Not  
Resign'

San Clemente

President Nixon, holding his first news conference in five months, acknowledged yesterday that the Watergate scandals had hampered his ability to govern. He asserted in a forceful manner, however, that he had never considered resigning and that he will serve the 3½ years remaining in his term.

Standing for 50 minutes in the bright sunlight on the lawn of the western White House, Mr. Nixon answered every question put to him on Watergate and related matters, blamed those who are opposed to his policies for keeping the scandals before the public and made a strong defense of Vice President Agnew, whose financial dealings are under federal investigation.

EMPHASIS

"I shall not resign," the President said with emphasis, "I have almost 3½ years remaining in office and I am going to use every day" implementing the policies on which he was re-elected last November.

It was the first televised news conference Mr. Nixon had held since June 1972.

Appearing on television screens across the nation to the same mid-day audience that had watched the Senate hearings all summer, the President made it clear that he was appealing to the people as a President harassed and abused by the news media and his political enemies.

While his answers to charges raised against him in the Senate Watergate hearings did not go much

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further than his previous statements made in televised speeches and in written statements, Mr. Nixon did provide some additional detail and he reduced somewhat the several questions left unanswered after his television address on the subject last week.

Following are the highlights of the President's remarks on the Watergate case and related matters:

- He explained his refusal to release the tape recordings of conversations between him and his aides in the Watergate case — not even to a judge who would extract matters non-essential to the prosecution — by saying executive privilege is absolute — "the principle of confidentiality exists or it does not exist."

- Asked about former Attorney General John N. Mitchell's testimony that he would have told the President about the coverup of the Watergate case if Mr. Nixon had asked him, the President said he would have expected Mitchell to tell him without being asked but that Mitchell's reason for not doing so was "exactly right. Had he told me, I would have blown my stack."

- Mr. Nixon said he still considers H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, his former aides who have been implicated in the Watergate case, "two of the finest public servants" he has ever known. "When all the facts

come out, when they have an opportunity to have their cases heard in court and not simply to be tried before a committee, and tried in the press, and tried in television, they will be exonerated."

- He defended at length the fact that Ehrlichman suggested to U.S. District Judge W. Matthew Byrne Jr. that he was being considered for FBI director while the judge was trying the case of Daniel Ellsberg, charged with stealing the

Pentagon Papers. The President maintained there was nothing improper about the approach and that he had approved it after then-Attorney General Richard Kleindienst described Byrne as "the best man" for the job.

- Mr. Nixon defended the legality of the burglaries, wiretapping and other surveillance by the special White House group called "the plumbers." He said a Supreme Court decision of "even last year indicates inherent power in the presidency to protect the national security in cases like this."

The President denied strongly telling John W. Dean III, former White House counsel, on March 21 that raising huge amounts of money for Watergate defendants was a possibility. He said Haldeman had quoted him correctly as saying, "John, it is wrong, it won't work. We can't give clemency and we have to get this story out."

SETTING

The news conference was held on the grounds of the small Coast Guard complex overlooking the Pacific next to Mr. Nixon's vacation house. A blue velvet curtain, framed by small pine trees, was set against a building for a background.

Mr. Nixon, wearing a dark blue suit with the usual American flag pin in his lapel, faced into the sun and overlooked scores of reporters and a large contingent of White House aides.

Mr. Nixon, although clearly ill at ease at times, appeared determined to convince the people that he is capable of governing the country and has a tight rein on the presidency.

He denied that he had considered resigning at any time during the Watergate crisis — although his daughter Julie Eisenhower had said he had once said so, as devil's advocate — and that he had lost his capacity to govern.

STATEMENT

"It is true that as far as the capacity to govern is concerned that to be under a constant barrage 12 to 15 minutes a night on each of the three major networks for four months tends to raise some questions in the people's minds with regard to the President and it may

raise some questions with regard to the capacity to govern," he said.

"But I also know this," he continued. "I was elected to do a job. Watergate is an episode that I deeply deplore and had I been running the campaign rather than trying to run the country and particularly the foreign policy of this country at this time, it would never have happened. But that is water under the bridge, it is gone now."

QUESTION

Asked to identify those who the President said in his television speech last week were out to exploit Watergate and keep him from doing his job, Mr. Nixon said:

"I would suggest that where the shoe fits, people should well it . . . wear it. I would think that some political figures, some members of the press, perhaps, some members of the television, perhaps, would exploit it . . . people who did not accept the mandate of 1972, who do not want the foreign leadership that I want to give, who do not want to cut down the size of this government bureaucracy that burdens us so greatly and to give more of our government back to the people, people who do not want these things, naturally, would exploit any issue . . . to keep the President from doing his job."

AGNEW

On vice president Agnew, Mr. Nixon said he still has full confidence in his integrity and he sided with the vice president in attacking leaks in the Justice Department of the investigation now under way.

"Convicting an individual — not only trying him but convicting him — in the headlines and on television before he has had a chance to present his case in court is completely contrary to the American tradition," he said. "Even a vice president has a right to some, shall I say, consideration in this respect, let alone the ordinary individual."

New York Times



The President picked the next questioner from among the reporters clamoring for a chance

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