

NIXON PLEDGES A STRONG TERM;  
ASSAILS HIS WATERGATE CRITICS;  
DEFENDS AGNEW, DECRIES LEAKS

8-23-73

A RARE NEWS TALK

President Appeals to  
Nation to Help Him  
Press Policies

By JOHN HERBERS  
Special to The New York Times

SAN CLEMENTE, Calif., Aug. 22—President Nixon, holding his first news conference in five months, acknowledged today that the Watergate scandals had hampered his ability to govern, but he asserted in a forceful manner that he had never considered resigning and would serve the three and a half year remaining in his term with the full authority of a strong Presidency. [Question 10, Page 28.]

Standing for 50 minutes in the bright sunlight on the lawn

Transcript of news conference  
appears on Pages 28 and 29.

of the Western White House, Mr. Nixon—clearly nervous at times—replied to 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.

"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.

Conference Televised

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 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 further than his previous statements made in tele-

vised speeches and in written statements, Mr. Nixon did provide some additional detail and he reduced somewhat the host of 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:

Explaining 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 nonessential to the prosecution, Mr. Nixon said executive privilege is absolute—"the principle of confidentiality exists or it does not exist." [Question 4.]

Asked about former Attorney General John N. Mitchell's testimony that he would have told the President about the cover-up of the Watergate case if Mr. Nixon had asked him, the President said he would have expected Mr. Mitchell to tell him without being asked but that Mr. Mitchell's reason for doing so was "exactly right. Had he told me, I would have blown my stack." [Question 6.]

Mr. Nixon said he still considered 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." [Question 12.]

Mr. Nixon defended at length the fact that Mr. Ehrlichman

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suggested to United States District Judge W. Matthew Byrne Jr. that he was being considered for the post of director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation while the judge was trying the case of Dr. Daniel Ellsberg, charged with stealing secret Government documents, the Pentagon papers. Mr. Nixon maintained there was nothing improper about the approach, that he, the President, had approved it after Mr. Ehrlichman described Judge Byrne as "the best man" for the job. [Question 8.]

Mr. Nixon defended the legality of the burglaries, wire-

tapping and other surveillance by the special White House group called "the plumbers." He said a Supreme Court decision or "even last year indicates inherent power in the presidency to protect the national security in cases like this." [Question 18.]

The President denied strongly-telling John W. Dean 3d, former White House counsel, on March 21 that raising hush money for Watergate defendants was a possibility. He said Mr. 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." [Question 13.]

Setting for Conference

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 of ease at times, appeared determined to convince the people that he is capable of governing the country and has a tight reign 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 not lost his capacity to govern.

Question 10

"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."

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 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."

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 about charges in Maryland.

Agnew Rights Stressed

"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."

Mr. Nixon said anyone in the Government found to have leaked information on charges being considered against Mr. Agnew would be "summarily dismissed."

He would not comment on whether any consideration had been given to naming a successor as Vice President, should Mr. Agnew be convicted.

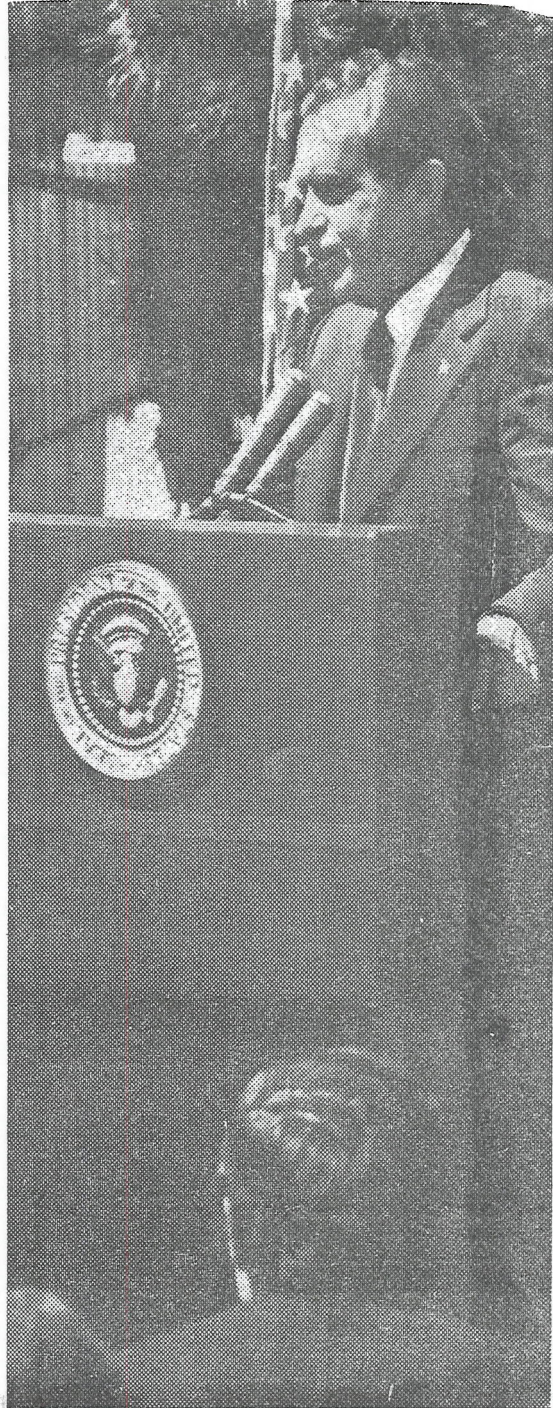
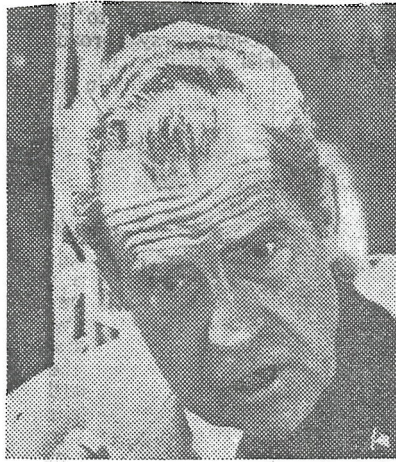
"For me to talk about it would be totally inappropriate," Mr. Nixon said.

On Watergate, some of the President's statements, as to meeting dates and points discussed, conflicted with testimony before the Senate committee and in civil court suits.

For example, Mr. Nixon, asked who he had instructed to investigate after the burglary of Democratic headquarters in 1972, said he turned first to Clark MacGregor, who succeeded John N. Mitchell as head of the Nixon re-election effort.

"He told me he would conduct a thorough investigation as far as his entire committee staff was concerned," Mr. Nixon said. "He told me he would conduct a thorough investigation as far as his entire committee staff was concerned." [Question 5.]

Mr. MacGregor, testifying in a civil suit, indicated the President never asked for any such investigation.



United Press International and Associated Press  
**President Nixon during the news conference he held yesterday at San Clemente, Calif.**