

Congress Reacts to Nixon Criticism--Demos Angry

Washington

Congress went back to work yesterday after a month-long summer recess, and the reaction of members to President Nixon's criticism of their performance this year split fairly distinctly along party lines.

Mr. Nixon's announcement that he would send Congress another State of the Union message drew the most criticism, especially from Democrats.

"I don't blame him for wanting another State of the Union message because the first one was very disappointing," said House Speaker Carl Albert (Dem-Okla.).

The greatest degree of accord appeared to be on Mr. Nixon's pledge to try to work more closely with Congress in the coming months.

PLEDGE

That pledge, Mr. Nixon said, was in response to a suggestion from House Democratic Leader Thomas P. O'Neill of Massachusetts. After the President's news conference, O'Neill disclosed that he had received a call from Mr. Nixon's domestic

affairs adviser, Melvin R. Laird, who tentatively arranged a meeting at the White House for early next week.

"He (Mr. Nixon) can give a little and we can give a little," O'Neill said.

House Republican leader Gerald R. Ford of Michigan said he thought Mr. Nixon handled himself extremely well during the news conference.

"I'm pleased the President indicated the executive branch would work with Congress trying to get these things done," he said.

Senate Democratic leader Mike Mansfield of Montana disagreed with Mr. Nixon's statement that congressional action this year is "a disappointing performance so far."

"I think Congress has done a pretty good, workmanlike job," Mansfield said. "We've moved the ball over the goal line several times. And the game isn't over yet."

Albert listed for newsmen a list of priority bills which appeared to reflect congressional, rather than White House, priorities.

Meanwhile, the Senate began business by refusing to eliminate a special presidential fund despite senators' speculation it might have been used to finance the activities of the White House "plumbers" unit.

By a 52 to 36 vote, the Senate refused to delete the \$1 million for the White House special projects fund in a \$5.12 billion appropriations bill.

Senator Walter F. Mondale (Dem - Minn.) tried to delete the money, saying Congress must "insist on decisions being made by cabinet departments responsible to the people."

ACTION

The House had voted to delete the money, and the bill now goes to a conference.

In other action:

- The House passed a \$105 million bill to help prevent lead-based paint poisoning.

- Senator Robert Dole (Rep - Kan.) introduced a resolution to close the Senate Watergate hearings to the public.

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