

Flood of Telegrams

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The centralized Western Union office here that serves the eight western states was swamped yesterday by persons wanting to send telegrams to Washington, D.C.

The crush started Saturday, said one of the 75 workers and supervisors called in on overtime to man telephones, moments after television and radio networks bulletined the firing of Special Watergate Prosecutor Archibald Cox and the resignation of Attorney General Elliot Richardson.

By late yesterday there was no sign of a let up in requests to send messages to the White House and legislators. Huge electronic lightboards, which register incoming calls, remained "lit up like Christmas trees" all Saturday night and through most of yesterday.

The automated bureau here has only been in operation since last December said Stephen Teglas, operations manager, but he said this weekend was easily the most frantic they have had.

A normal weekend sees about 4000 telegrams sent through Reno, he said. By late afternoon yesterday there were already 15,000.

Callers had to wait an average of only about one minute before giving their messages.

He said "regulations" prevented any disclosure of how strongly the telegrams were running for or against the actions by President Nixon. Nor would he reveal to whom most of the telegrams were being sent.

Gerald Thorsen, a control and operation analyst for the office, gave a hint of the trend by his response when asked if any telegrams were being sent that support the President.

"Oh," he said, "there are always a few."

Most of the telegrams being

sent took advantage of a special arrangement set up by Western Union for the dispatch of political opinions.

This calls for a flat \$2 fee, and gives the sender up to 15 words to say what he wants.

The messages are sent almost instantaneously via microwave to a Western Union computer center in Middletown Va., where they are put into message format. They are wired from there to local offices and then reach their final destinations by mail carrier.

All phone requests from the eight western states are routed through Reno on a toll-free line. The number is 800-648-8100.