

The President: 'I'm not a crook'

Associated Press

ORLANDO (Fla.)—President Nixon declared last night that "I'm not a crook," not in Watergate, in his personal finances or in any of the other charges of scandal that confront his administration.

For more than an hour in a nationally televised appearance before the Associated Press Managing Editors Association, Nixon denied wrongdoing and said time and time again that he is telling the truth.

And he vowed to work for as long as he is physically able at the job to which he was twice elected and said he will strive "to restore confidence in the White House and in the President."

"I want to be remembered," he said, "as a President who did his best to bring peace. . . prosperity. . . a contribution in the energy field. . . the environment field. . . and who did his best when his own campaign got out of hand to see that nobody else's campaign gets out of hand."

Only briefly did the discussion turn from the scandals to other matters, notably gasoline rationing. He said he does not want to impose it but he may have to.

It was in a discussion of personal finances that Nixon made this dramatic statement, after specifically alerting his television audience to what was coming:

"I've made my mistakes but in all my years of public life I have never profited from public service. I have earned every cent. And in all of my years of public life, I have never obstructed justice.

"People have got to know whether or not their President is a crook," he said. "Well, I'm not a crook. I earned everything I've got."

The scene was the Ballroom of the Americas at a hotel at Disney World near Orlando. Nearly 400 newspaper editors were assembled there, and they asked the questions with their wives and children in the audience.

So anxious was Nixon to address the charges against his administration that he kept the session running overtime to deny accusations that dairymen got a milk-price increase in exchange for campaign contributions.

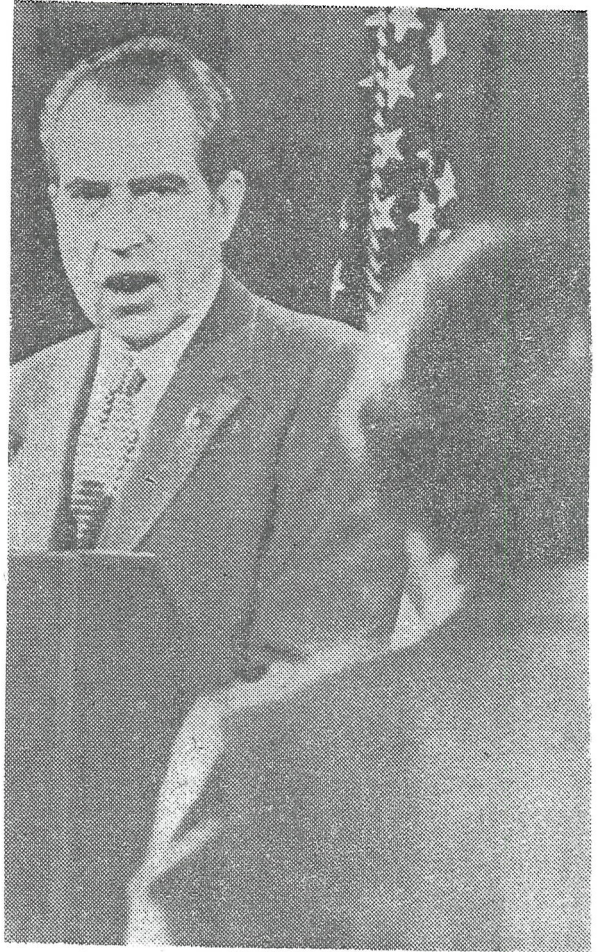
The President said he wanted to answer that one, and when the hour ran out, he told the television networks to keep him on while he did so.

Nixon said Democrats in Congress applied the real pressure for the dairy price increases and that it was a "bad rap" to suggest impropriety on the part of the administration.

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Watergate

Text, Congressional Quarterly, /vol. 2,
p. 152.



Nixon answering a question at Disney World

—AP Photo

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Speaking with animation, and at times wryly, Nixon:

- Disclosed that he paid \$79,000 in income taxes in 1969 but only nominal sums in 1970 and 1971 because of deductions for the donation of his vice presidential papers. He said all his investments are in California and Florida real estate.

- Blamed the fact that two key Watergate conversations were not recorded on inadequacies in the White House tape system, which he said was not sophisticated. But he said other tapes and documents would prove he had no advance knowledge of the Watergate burglary, that he never authorized an offer of executive clemency to anyone and turned it down when it was suggested, and that he did not know until March 21 of blackmail demands by a Watergate conspirator.

- Said he told Assistant Attorney General Henry Petersen that "national security matters were not matters that should be investigated" in the Watergate probe. He said "some very highly sensitive matters" were involved and that the Senate Watergate committee decided "they should not delve further into them." He gave no other details but declared that "where the national security would be disserved by having an investigation, the President has the responsibility to protect it..."

Said he still believes that two of his former aides, H.R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, "will come out alright" in clearing themselves of Watergate-related charges. But, he said, "unfortunately, they have already been convicted in the minds of millions of Americans by what happened before a Senate committee."

- Acknowledged that the

Secret Service had placed his brother, Donald, under surveillance, with Donald's consent because other persons, including some foreign countries, were trying to get him to use his influence improperly. He refused to explain further.

Although Watergate and other allegations about the administration predominated, even as he spoke of rationing did the problems he faces become part of his answer. Nixon noted that as a personal step to save energy, he ordered the back-up airplane left behind on his current trip to Florida.

If this one goes down, it goes down, then they don't have to impeach," he said.
