

President Won't Quit, Ziegler Says

Unsupported Charges Blamed for Drop in The Opinion Polls

Washington

Presidential press secretary Ronald Ziegler yesterday blamed unsupported charges against the president, more than the Watergate scandal, for Mr. Nixon's drop in the opinion polls.

In his first press briefing in more than a month, Ziegler also said the White House intended to shun further counter-attacks against Watergate charges and to concentrate instead on running the government.

The president is "not entertaining at all" suggestions that he resign, Ziegler said. "He fully intends to complete his three years in office."

Mr. Nixon is convinced the 18½-minute erasure of a key Watergate tape was not deliberate, Ziegler said, but "we do not know how it happened." The gap, caused by at least five separate erasures, has been referred to a grand jury for possible criminal prosecutions. The FBI is questioning the presidential staff about the matter.

In the response to questions, Ziegler also said Mr. Nixon is conducting a personal investigation to see if his donation of \$576,000 worth of vice presidential papers to the national archives met legal tax requirements.

Mr. Nixon is aware of the charge that the deed transferring the papers was backdated by lawyers to get un-

der the deadline for such tax-deductible gifts, Ziegler said. A congressional committee is looking into his deductions, and "we will address all tax matters at one time" following its report, he added.

On the broader issue of
Back-Page Col. 6

From Page 1

Mr. Nixon's future in office, Ziegler said Mr. Nixon "knows he's not been involved in wrongdoing as charged. That, more than anything else, leads to his determination to do the job he was elected to do."

"We feel that in the long run, by the president doing his job, accomplishing initiatives in foreign and domestic areas, the country will realize he has been in his office working on problems related to the interest of the country and not involved with things he's charged with."

Part of Mr. Nixon's drop in credibility, Ziegler admitted, has come from the break-in at Democratic headquarters and the subsequent coverup.

"But the substantial impact has been the constant,

constant, constant, constant charge, charge, charge against the President of the United States—unsupported charges, but charges very difficult to catch up with before they become implanted in public opinion.

"Mistakes of Watergate, of course, had an impact, but this element (unsupported charges) has had even more substantial impact," Ziegler said.

Among such allegations Ziegler listed Mr. Nixon's purchase of the San Clemente house, the sources of campaign funds, and leaks from some investigative bodies.

"Our view is that the way to see (poll) figures go up is not to constantly be devoted to proving the negative as we have been forced to do, and constantly be on the defensive against charges. We also feel the country wants their Government to do the job of governing.

"That's what we hope to devote more of our time to in these briefings, while setting up a procedure to answer the inquiries the press have regarding the legal aspects of Watergate," he said.

To show Mr. Nixon doing his job as President, Ziegler pointed to Mr. Nixon's busy schedule this week.

There have been and will be meetings with Congressmen and Cabinet officers, a new energy message to Congress, "perhaps a National Security Council meeting this week, too," he said. The State of the Union message will be delivered on prime time television (6 p.m. PDT), January 30, and will be followed by the economic message and the budget, he

added.

On his own status, Ziegler said he intends to give more briefings. He has appeared before the press about once a month—compared to daily sessions in his first four years—since the Watergate case broke this spring.

Asked why he was returning, he said: "I enjoy being here." Pressed on the point, he added: "I figured six months is too long to be away from my friends in the press."

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