

# President Rejects Quitting Feels Erasure Not Deliberate, Ziegler Says

By Carroll Kilpatrick  
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President Nixon is determined to serve out his full term and to stop being "consumed another year by Watergate," the White House said yesterday in a quick reply to renewed calls for the President's resignation.

The President intends to complete his three remaining years in office and is "not entertaining at all the subject of resignation," press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said in his first press briefing since Nov. 29.

With the President's standing in the polls at an all-time low and with Congress debating impeachment proceedings, Ziegler proclaimed the President's innocence of Watergate charges and said he does not know how the gap occurred on the tape of his June 20, 1972, conversation with former aide H. R. (Bob) Haldeman.

"The President does not feel it [the erasure] was deliberate," Ziegler said in the course of an hour-long meeting with reporters. "We do not know how it happened. The President does not know how it happened. If we did, we would say so."

Ziegler's reintroduction to the White House press corps appeared to be part of a campaign to check the new demands for action against the President as Congress reassembles for a second year with Watergate the principal issue.

Earlier in the week, Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott (Pa.) reported that the White House has information to uphold the President's version of events. Yesterday Vice President Ford vigorously defended the President in a news conference.

The President won a degree of support from a Democratic leader when Sen. Mike Mansfield (Mont.) told newsmen that he did not believe Mr. Nixon should resign. "That is a decision he should make for

himself," the Senate leader said.

"The facts should continue to be laid out," Mansfield commented. He said he would reserve judgment on impeachment, noting that is an issue the House must decide.

Ziegler said that Mr. Nixon has been "under massive attacks" and has been "substantially maligned" over the past year but has continued to demonstrate that he can govern. He knows he has "not

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been involved in any wrongdoing," Ziegler declared.

Asked how the President viewed his drop in the public opinion polls, Ziegler said "there would have to be, as there has been, an effect on the polls. We recognize that. And the way to see those figures go up is to be not constantly devoted to proving the negative . . . and constantly being on the defensive."

Much of the erosion of presidential popularity has been the result of "the constant, constant, constant, constant charge, charge, charge" against him, Ziegler said.

Asked if the erosion had not been the result of "sensational disclosures," the press secretary replied: "That's hard for me to say. I prefer to rest my answer as I gave it to you."

When a reporter asked if the President should not be held accountable for his top aides, Ziegler declined to give a direct answer.

He emphasized that the President is busy on foreign and domestic issues not related to Watergate, and cited a number of meetings he has had or has scheduled this week with members of Congress.

The President will send a special message on energy to Congress today, Ziegler said. Before the message goes to the Hill, Mr. Nixon will meet with Democratic and Republican leaders to brief them on the message.

"The President feels that

there is a lot of work to be done by Congress," Ziegler said. "The President is determined to devote his time to matters relating to legislation and to running the government."

"He's determined not to be consumed another year by Watergate."

Mr. Nixon believes that "we have had almost a year of extensive investigation of Watergate. . . and that it's time to wrap this matter up and conclude it."

"We feel that the country wants the government to do a job in Washington. And that's what we intend to do."

Questioned about a Newsweek report that deeds to the President's papers which he gave to the National Archives were back-dated, Ziegler said: "We are looking into that in some detail. The President wants to find out about it and how the paper work was done."

Regarding the President's tax problems, Ziegler declined to say whether Mr. Nixon intended to pay back California income taxes. "We want to address the entire tax matter at one time," he said.

When newsmen asked when the President might hold another press conference (the last one was Oct. 26), Ziegler smiled and said he did not want to make the same promises of more press conferences he has made at the beginning of other years.

But he said that "as a part of addressing important issues the President will be speaking out a great deal."

Ziegler said he conducted the briefing instead of deputy

press secretary Gerald L. Warren, who held most of the White House briefings lately, because he thought "six months was too long to be away from the press." He said he would conduct the briefings "more often" in the future.

Commenting on reports that he would give up the press secretary's title and keep his other one as assistant to the President, Ziegler said he and Warren would keep their present titles "for at least a while."

Ken W. Clawson, deputy director of communications, is expected to be named director to succeed former director Herbert G. Klein.

Ziegler defended the new White House rule requiring all aides to report to the press secretary on meetings with newsmen.

Aides will talk more on the record and less for back ground, Ziegler said, to avoid contributing to stories which reports "sources said" rather than naming an individual.

"Source stories have been getting somewhat out of hand," he said.

In Houston, Mr. Nixon's chief domestic adviser, Kenneth R. Cole Jr., also said that the President believes in himself and in his programs and has no plan to resign.

"The fact is the man still believes he can lead this country and that he has programs that can help the country," Cole told the National Association of Home Builders convention. "If you believe in what you're fighting for, you're not going to resign."