

# Answers President

## Low-Key Talk Dismisses Idea Of Resignation

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Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) last night rejected President Nixon's bid to close the curtain on Watergate and challenged him to join Congress in an effort to "clean up the campaign-financing mess" by supporting public campaign finance bills.

Delivering the Democratic Party's televised reply to Mr. Nixon's Wednesday evening State of the Union address, Mansfield said "the crimes of Watergate" must be aired in the courts "for however long may be necessary."

In response to the President's statement that "one year of Watergate is enough," the opposition party spokesman said, "Whether it is months or years, there are no judicial shortcuts."

However, Mansfield said he would "anticipate" that the Senate Watergate committee's investigation and House action on impeachment "will be completed during this session."

And he delivered a rebuke—in characteristically mild fashion—to those Democrats in Congress who have been urging Mr. Nixon to resign.

"The question of a presidential resignation, as in the case of a vice-presidential resignation is not one for the Congress," Mansfield said. "The President has stated his intentions bluntly in that regard. Insofar as the Congress is concerned, that closes the matter of resignation."

He also said Congress would do as the President suggested and make legislation—not investigation—"the first order of business" from now until election day.

"Whatever the legal difficulties which confront the administration," Mansfield said, "the regular business of the nation must come first. The President put it first. Insofar as Congress is concerned, it will be first."

Appearing simultaneously on the three commercial networks and the Public Broadcasting System on one of the  
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rare occasions that that opportunity has been accorded to an opposition party spokesman, Mansfield took a deliberately low-keyed and nonpartisan tone.

He praised Mr. Nixon's foreign policy successes, found no fault with his domestic record and described the impeachment proceedings in Congress as "onerous" but "inescapable."

As for the 1974 mid-term election, which many Democrats regard as an opportunity for major gains, Mansfield said that "transitory political lives" are unimportant compared with "the political life of the nation."

For that reason, Mansfield said, the most important work of the last session was "to reinforce the nation's system of checks and balances against an accumulation of power in the executive branch," and the most "urgent obligation" this year is "to foreclose an excessive intrusion of great wealth, whether corporate, labor, personal or whatever, into the electoral process."

Mansfield said his personal judgment was that "we shall not come finally to grips with the problem except as we are prepared to pay for the public business of elections with public funds."

Last December, the Senate passed a bill to provide public financing of all federal elections, but the House balked at including congressional contests, and a filibuster, encouraged by White House aides, killed chances of a compromise.

Another public financing measure is slated for debate this month or next, and Mansfield said, "I would hope that the President will join with the congressional leadership in supporting these efforts to clean up the campaign-financing mess."

Reversing the usual Democratic effort to present a more ambitious domestic program than the Republicans, Mansfield criticized Mr. Nixon's proposed \$304 billion budget as excessive, and mentioned less than a dozen domestic areas Congress would "consider" this year.

Among his legislative priorities, the Senate leader listed a

national health insurance system, expansion of housing and education assistance, reform of private pension systems, development of no-fault automobile insurance and passage of "a fair minimum wage."

Most of these goals are also on Mr. Nixon's list, but the minimum wage bill passed by Congress last year drew a presidential veto, and sharp differences of approach can be expected in several of the other areas.

Mansfield said "there will be time to try" for reform of the tax system this year, but he offered no details of the Democratic approach in his prepared text. No action on tax reform has been taken by Congress since the House Ways and Means Committee completed hearings on the issue early in 1973.

The Montana senator said, "hopefully . . . military spending can be cut, not increased," as Mr. Nixon is proposing, but

again his text offered little clue to the substance of Democratic strategy.

Perhaps mindful of the fact that Congress has been snarled since last November in a House-Senate dispute over the terms of emergency energy legislation sought by the President, Mansfield was also sparing in his discussion of that subject—to which Mr. Nixon had given top priority in his speech.

He said, "The immediate responsibility of government is to make certain that the shortage does not devastate the economy and that the price of past neglect is borne equitably by all American. If that means rationing, then let us not hesitate to use this device."

Mansfield said Congress would require more information from the oil companies, "scrutinize" their tax benefits and "consider" a price rollback on petroleum products.