

Resignation To Aid Party Is Rejected

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon declared last night that he does not expect to be impeached and that he fully intends to serve out his term regardless of the consequences to his party.

At his first news conference in four months, the President fielded a variety of political and Watergate-related questions, insisting that Congress may bring an impeachment charge only on a finding of criminal conduct.

"A full impeachment trial in the Senate under our Constitution comes only when the House determines that there is an impeachable offense," the President said in answer to a question.

"It is my belief that the House after it conducts its inquiry will not reach that determination. I do not expect to be impeached."

Mr. Nixon handled tough questions calmly. The acrimony that developed at the Oct. 26 press conference, when the President reacted heatedly to what he considered accusatory questions, was largely absent last night.

The President disclosed for the first time that he had offered to answer written questions from special prosecutor Leon Jaworski or to meet personally with him to respond to questions.

However, Jaworski, who had requested that the President appear before the Watergate grand jury, declined the President's offer.

The President said that "on constitutional grounds he 'respectfully declined' to appear before a grand jury.

When a reporter asked if the President would reconsider his decision against resigning if it became evident that his party was going to suffer disastrous defeat in November, he replied in the negative.

"I want my party to succeed," the President explained, "but more important I want the presidency to survive."

He argued that the presidency must not be "hostage to what happens to the popularity of a President at one time or another," and he maintained that the stability of the presidency and a President's ability to govern must be preserved.

Referring to his foreign and domestic initiatives, Mr. Nixon said, "All of these things, these goals, are yet before us. We have a lot of work left to do... and I am going to stay here until I get it done."

The President appeared to

See PRESIDENT, A13, Col. 1

PRESIDENT, From A1

take philosophically the defeat last week of a Republican candidate in Vice President Ford's old Michigan congressional district.

When asked about the matter, he said it was not necessarily an indication of what will happen in November.

"Nine months before an election no one can predict what can happen in this country," he said. "What will affect the election in this year 1974 is what always affects elections — peace and prosperity.

"On the peace front, we're doing well, and I think we'll continue to do well.

"With regard to the prosperity issue, the bread-and-butter issue, as I've already indicated, I think that this economy is going to be moving up. I think, therefore, it will be a good year for those candidates who stand for the administration."

Mr. Nixon promised in a guarded way to cooperate with the House Judiciary Committee, which is conducting the impeachment inquiry. But he declined to say precisely what material he would make available to the committee.

Noting that negotiations are under way between the committee counsel and his counsel, the President said he would cooperate to the extent possible "consistent with my constitutional responsibility to defend the office of the presidency."

But he said that certain documents must remain confidential and that procedures must be worked out to protect the rights of defendants as well as the ability of the special prosecutor to carry out his duties.

The President's view of what constitutes an impeachable offense was much narrower than that of the House Judiciary Committee staff lawyers.

The Constitution provides that a President "shall be removed from office on impeachment for, and conviction of, treason, bribery or other high crimes and misdemeanors."

The committee staff, in a report last week, said a President could be impeached and removed from office for

actions that need not be crimes under the law. He can be removed for serious crimes against the public interest, the staff said.

A Justice Department memo has suggested that a President might be impeached for a noncriminal offense but that the charge must center on a "gross abuse of office" and not simply maladministration.

Mr. Nixon argued that the Constitution is "very precise in defining what is an impeachable offense."

James D. St. Clair, the White House counsel, and other experts believe that "a criminal offense on the part of the President is the requirement for impeachment." Mr. Nixon said, St. Clair is preparing a brief on the subject for the Judiciary Committee.

If the House accepts the President's definition rather than the staff's it would be much less likely to vote a bill of impeachment.

Rep. John Anderson (R-Ill.) said last night he believed the President's definition of an impeachable offense would conflict with the definition of many members of the Judiciary Committee. "I'm sure there are many on the Judiciary Committee who would define impeachment in broader terms," Anderson said. "And therein lies the rub."

In answer to other questions, Mr. Nixon:

• Denied that he ever sold ambassadorships to campaign contributors. The question arose over a charge that his lawyer, Herbert W. Kalmbach, accepted \$100,000 in exchange

for a promise of an ambassadorial post to the contributor. Mr. Nixon said he never was consulted on the matter and has initiated an investigation to determine who was responsible for making the promise.

• Declared once again that he would abide by the decision of the congressional Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation on whether he should pay taxes on his vice presidential papers, which he gave to the government and claimed over a half-million dollars in tax deductions.

• Refused, when asked for the first time his reaction to the resignation of Vice President Agnew, to "join anybody else in kicking him when he's down."

Agnew resigned because "of the embarrassment he knew that he would cause to the administration and also because he felt that in view of the criminal offense that was charged that he should not stay in office," Mr. Nixon said. "I can only say that in his period of service that he rendered dedicated service on all of the assignments that I gave him," he said.

In congressional comment after the press conference, House Minority Leader John Rhodes (R-Ariz.) praised the President for holding the session and said he should hold press meetings more frequently. "He handled some very difficult questions with candor and in a forthright manner."

Rep. Thomas Foley (D-Wash.), head of the House Democratic Study Group agreed. "I'm glad he's facing the camera and the country again. I think that's helpful."