

White House Hits Mills for Predicting Nixon Will Resign

By Lou Cannon

Washington Post Staff Writer

The White House last night attacked Rep. Wilbur D. Mills for his prediction that President Nixon will resign when the full story of his income tax deductions becomes known.

Responding to a prediction of the President's resignation made last week by the Arkansas Democrat, White House counselor Bryce Harlow said: "Mr. Mills should put up or shut up."

Last week Mills, who is vice chairman of the Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation, which is studying Mr. Nixon's 1969-72 income tax returns, said the committee will issue a report that will give more cause for the President's resignation than anything to come out of Watergate so far.

Speaking in Little Rock, Mills said, "I have talked to some key Republican members of Congress who say that if [Mr. Nixon] is still in office by the month of June they will ask him to resign."

"... Those I have talked to are dissatisfied with the President's handling of his tax returns," Mills added.

Talking to reporters on the presidential plane en route from Homestead Air Force Base in Florida to Andrews Air Force Base, Harlow said that if Mills has some facts on which to base his statement he should make them known.

Harlow accused the Arkansas congressman of engaging in "guilty by innuendo." He said that 20 years ago the press became very upset about a campaign of guilty by innuendo and he wondered why the press was not upset about the Mills' statement.

Harlow, a onetime aide to President Eisenhower who has long been a political figure in Washington, praised President Nixon as the strongest man he had seen in public service and said that the President is "feeling fine."

"I don't think you can get that man down," Harlow said.

In another reference to Mills, Harlow termed his conduct "un-Mills-like." Mills has long been regarded by the White House as more sympathetic to the President's problems than many other Democrats in Congress.

The committee, at Mr. Nixon's request, is now considering the issue of whether the

President acted properly in taking federal income tax deductions for a gift of some of his vice presidential papers and in not paying a capital gains tax on sale of land around his San Clemente residence.

Harlow also said during the interview that he will be leaving his White House job "as soon as I can reasonably do so—and it won't be very long." It has long been known that Harlow is anxious to leave the government and return to a job in private life.

The President's arrival at Andrews after a four-day stay at Key Biscayne was marked by an unusual incident.

The press plane carrying White House reporters arrived about 25 minutes before Mr. Nixon, and the reporters were told that they would be taken out to the runway to greet the returning President. However, when they attempted to enter the gate leading to the runway they were barred from doing so by Secret Service agents despite the fact that the customary area had already been roped off in which they were to watch the President's arrival.

A Secret Service agent who identified himself as "Egan" said that reporters could not be allowed into the roped-off area because a "10-minute freeze" was in effect. He said that no one except the commanding general of the base could be allowed on the runway during this 10-minute period.

Afterward, White House officials attributed the incident to a mix-up caused by the fact that the press plane rarely arrives at Andrews before the President does. This is a frequent incident at Homestead and other bases, but White House officials said that security officers at Andrews were not aware that they were supposed to admit reporters to the roped-off area.