

Nixon Reception: Applause, Protest

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when he stopped off here after the Republican National Convention to address a wildly-cheering convention of the American Legion.

To some who had not seen the President in person for more than a year, he seemed much thinner and grayer. But he appeared to be in good spirits, vigorous and animated and largely at ease in replying to questions that were mostly soft and restrained.

"Oh, his performance was good today," said Lyndon Whitlock, an attorney with a large Chicago firm. "But he certainly didn't change many minds here with what he said. I've always opposed him myself. But most of this audience voted for him and I think wants to show their support for him now."

Donald Romans, vice-president of a Chicago manufacturing firm agreed.

"I'm a Republican and I agreed with the President that he certainly shouldn't resign, just because his popularity is low," Mr. Romans declared. "Everything he said here today he's said before. But to those who have supported him in the past, it feels good to hear him applauded and to see him in person again."

No Prepared Speech

"Well, I still have no confidence in his defense of Watergate," said Robert Robison, a Chicago business executive and companion of Mr. Romans. "Every time you get near the specifics, the President backs away. If he had come out forthrightly in the beginning, he'd be all

right. But everything has to be dragged out of him and he's butchering the English language trying to explain it."

Mr. Nixon did not give a prepared speech but immediately asked his audience for questions. At least 50 persons crowded around two floor microphones. They were taken in order, with no sign that the questioners had been screened first by the club's officers.

The most pointed question came from a businessman who asked whether, in view of the nation's uneasiness over the Watergate affair, it might not be better if the President resigned and, as a private citizen, explained his role in the affair.

This drew a slight scattering of applause. But when the President declared that

he would never step down, the room reverberated with cheers and clapping.

When he had completed his answer, Mr. Nixon stepped back from the rostrum and grasped a surprised Mayor Daley by the hand, pulling him back to the microphone to the Mayor's obvious embarrassment.

"I was a bit partisan with some of my remarks and I wanted your Mayor to know that I did not intend them that way," Mr. Nixon said.

Attorney General William J. Scott of Illinois, a Republican, also sat at the speaker's table. So did Cook County Republican Chairman Floyd T. Fulle, who suggested earlier this week that it might be a good idea to change the name of the Republican party in Cook County before the November elections.

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Nixon Reception Mixed: Applause and Protests

By SETH S. KING

Special to The New York Times

CHICAGO, March 15—Inside the cavernous grand ballroom of the Conrad Hilton Hotel it was warm and dry, and President Nixon's huge luncheon audience of Chicago business and professional persons was friendly and polite.

Outside, across Michigan Avenue, a cold rain brought discomfort to more than 300 shouting demonstrators, who demanded the President's impeachment, and about 50 counterdemonstrators, who supported an enormous banner urging the nation to back the President with prayer.

And a block away, in the Essex Hotel, a coalition of impeachment groups was displaying a tabletop covered with impeachment petitions bearing, they asserted, more than 50,000 signatures. The petitions were being forwarded today to the House Judiciary Committee.

With these pros and cons in such sharp display, a number of those present doubted that President Nixon changed many of the attitudes that Chicagoans now have toward him.

He landed in the dark last night and was sped to the hotel along a route kept secret. He left in much the same way, departing the hotel by a side door, walking through lines of policemen standing shoulder to shoulder and driving away from the demonstrators, who could not see him.

His luncheon audience of members of the nonpolitical Executives Club stood and applauded warmly for nearly two minutes as the President walked through the crowd to the rostrum.

It was his first visit to Chicago since August, 1972,

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