

Nixon Under Fire on Hill

Byrd: 'Distorts Truth'

By Spencer Rich

Washington Post Staff Writer

Senate Democratic Whip Robert C. Byrd (D-W. Va.) blasted President Nixon yesterday for an "unjustified vicious attack on Congress" on energy matters and for "deliberately distorting the truth" on the Watergate issue.

"The President is deliberately distorting the truth when he says that he is cooperating with the courts and the special prosecutor" and with the House Judiciary Committee, Byrd told reporters.

Referring to an accusation made by President Nixon at his Tuesday news conference that Congress is dragging its feet on energy legislation, Byrd said, "The President is obviously in a spot and he is trying to shift attention" away from his own failings.

President Nixon's criticism of Congress on the energy issue was also assailed yesterday by both House Democratic leaders.

"We passed one bill and he vetoed it," said House Speaker Carl Albert (D-Okla.).

"President Nixon engaged in one of his favorite diversions last night—sniping at Congress from the cover of a friendly audience," said House Majority Leader Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. (D-Mass.). "The only energy action we have is the result of a law passed by Congress last year over the President's objections. And the reason we have no new law is that the President vetoed it just a few days ago. He took sides with the oil companies who fought the oil price rollback."

See **BYRD, A8, Col. 4**

Conservative Drain

By Lou Cannon

Washington Post Staff Writer

Conservative politicians who are not yet ready to join Sen. James L. Buckley (Cons.-R-N.Y.) in calling for President Nixon's resignation are serving blunt notice that the White House must pay a price for continued support.

"What Buckley has done is pull a plug on the President's most important political reservoir," said Howard Phillips of the American Conservative Union. "It doesn't mean that all the water will flow out. It does mean that conservatives will reassess whether the issues they care most about can be served by continued support for President Nixon."

There were some signs that the water was leaking out of the reservoir even before Tuesday, when Buckley called on the President to resign and end "the crisis of the regime" that is doing "irrevocable damage to our entire system of government."

Earlier this week the ACU sent the White House the statements of 35 conservative senators and House members who were sharply critical of the President's proposed \$304 billion budget and estimated \$9.4 billion deficit.

An accompanying letter from ACU Chairman M. Stanton Evans described the budget as an attempt to "assuage your liberal critics who have grown progressively more strident since Watergate broke into the news. On past political history, it seems likely any such course is doomed to failure."

See **SUPPORT, A8, Col. 1**

Buckley Seen 'Pulling Plug' On Conservative Support

SUPPORT, From A1

Among congressmen agreeing to have their sharply critical budget statements sent to the White House were some of the President's staunchest Republican supporters — Sens. Barry Goldwater of Arizona, Carl Curtis of Nebraska, Jesse Helms of North Carolina and William Brock of Tennessee, as well as Buckley.

Several of these senators reportedly are prepared to work together for a conservative "zero-deficit budget" to be offered as an alternative to the Nixon administration proposal.

Conservatives in both houses are also ready to band together for a restrictive legal-services bill, more like the House version than the more liberal bill the Senate passed. They will have the support of one of Mr. Nixon's strongest backers, California Gov. Ronald Reagan, who publicly disagreed Tuesday with Buckley's call for resignation.

But Reagan has said that he will ask the President to veto an unrestrictive legal-services bill. Yesterday a spokesman for Reagan said:

"The governor is opposed to any federal legislation that goes materially further than the House version. . . . The main concerns have to do with creating at taxpayers' expense a legal-services organization that is heavily committed to the 'staff attorney' concept . . . and creating an entity that would be used for political purposes under the guise of liberal services."

In the House, some Democrats charged that Mr. Nixon has already moved to the right in an attempt to hold his conservative support on the impeachment issue. They cited the White House scuttling of a land-use bill in the Rules Committee, its opposition to \$800 million in mass-transit subsidies and its proposal of weakening amendments to a consumer protection agency bill that the administration had previously supported.

"I think the President is changing his stand on legislation to placate the conservatives," said Rep. Morris K. Udall (D-Ariz.) "The President finds himself with his back to the window and his first prior-



REP. JOHN ROUSSELOT
... "a lot of disgust"

ity is not to offend his hard-core base."

Privately, however, several conservative congressmen expressed the feeling that the President may be offering too little, too late to salvage his support among conservatives. One Eastern conservative said that the President "has thrown us a bone or two, but that isn't going to change what happens on impeachment."

"Sen. Buckley said something that a great many of us feel but don't want to say," said this House member. "The only thing that bothers me about resignation is that I believe in orderly procedure. But it may be the easiest way out."

Rep. John Rousselot (R-Calif.), the treasurer of the 70-member organization of conservatives known as the Republican Steering Committee, said that Buckley may be "ahead of his time" when he talks about the impeachment trial in the Senate becoming a "Roman circus."

"Conservatives don't want to lead the charge," said Rousselot. "They don't want to ask for a public hanging in the square. But there is quite a lot of disgust with what has been going on."

Rep. Phil Crane of Illinois, another official of this conservative House group, said he disagreed with Buckley's conclusion because resignation "would work at cross purposes

with what Sen. Buckley seeks — preservation of the presidency." Crane said, however, that he had "enormous respect" for Buckley's intellect and integrity.

Rousselot and Crane and another conservative, Rep. Bob Bauman (R-Md.), all said they would be willing to vote for impeachment if the evidence calls for such a vote.

"If the House did in fact vote impeachment—and I don't know that they will—and the Senate started the proceeding and it became obvious that events were going against the President, he might take another view of resignation," Rousselot said. "Maybe this is what Wilbur Mills was trying to say."

Mills (D-Ark.), predicted last Sunday that the President would either resign or be impeached by November. Mills is vice chairman of the Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation which is reviewing the President's tax returns.

The President and his spokesmen have denied that he will step down and have predicted that impeachment will be unsuccessful.

The White House has also tried to discount the Buckley statement. A White House official said yesterday that he does not expect any widespread conservative support for Buckley's position.

Phillips termed the Buckley defection "very significant" and added, "The fact that the White House is surprised by what happened indicates how little they understand the feelings of conservatives in the country. . . . When a respected figure like Buckley says this, it encourages the same attitude at the grass roots."

Resignation or impeachment will become inevitable, Phillips said, if the President loses the "critical component" of conservative support.

"It's too late for token appeasement of conservatives," Phillips said. "The bond of faith based on the belief that he is one of us has long since passed."

Staff Writers Mary Russell and Jules Witcover also contributed to this report.

Byrd Hits Nixon for Attacking Hill

BYRD, From A1

The remarks directed against Mr. Nixon by Byrd, an astute, powerful and cautious man, are among the harshest aimed at Mr. Nixon by a Democratic leader of Congress.

For Byrd, they represent a step into the center of the battle between Congress and the President over energy policy and the Watergate issue.

Byrd strongly backed both Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski and the House Judiciary Committee in their demands for materials which the White House has declined to furnish, and repeated several times that it is a "distortion" for the President to claim he is cooperating fully. He cited a letter from Jaworski to the Senate Judiciary Committee complaining that the White House is withholding data sought by Jaworski, and he described the House Judiciary impeachment probe as "a legitimate constitutional inquiry" to which Mr. Nixon isn't giving real cooperation.

Byrd made clear that he has adopted the broad view of the impeachment power. He said it is permissible not only when there is a serious crime committed by the President, but also when there is serious misconduct in office.

He said the White House argument that the President can be impeached only for a specific felonious act is "a gross exaggeration and gross distortion."

The sharpness of Byrd's remarks reflect a frustration on the part of Democratic leaders that the President, through press conferences and special reports to the public, has been able to command prime television time to plead his case on impeachment and to attack Congress — while Congress has no corresponding forum.

Amnesty in Burma

Agence France-Presse

RANGOON, March 20—President Ne Win granted amnesty today to all insurgents who surrender before June 16 this year provided they are not guilty of murder or rape.