

Nixon Pledges Aid in Tour Of Tornado Area in Ohio

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XENIA, Ohio, April 9—President Nixon made a surprise tour of this tornado-ravaged town today and pledged whatever Federal aid was necessary for rebuilding.

Killer tornadoes ripped through the area last Wednesday and destroyed half the homes and businesses of this town of 25,000. The death toll here, which is still mounting, was 34 today.

"It's the worst devastation I've ever seen," Mr. Nixon said. "I've seen earthquakes in Alaska, hurricanes in Mississippi and floods in Pennsylvania, but in terms of sheer destruction, I've never seen anything like this."

The President spent an hour and a half in this southwest Ohio town, 15 miles east of Dayton. He had flown to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base at about noon. He took a helicopter to Xenia, landed at an elementary school on the outskirts of town and drove into the heart of downtown, which was almost totally destroyed in the disaster.

Sees Local Officials

He met with officials of the town and Greene County, some still wearing dirty clothes and hard hats from participating in the mop-up operations. He also met with the presidents of two predominantly black colleges, and he spoke briefly to disaster relief workers.

Mr. Nixon promised them all that Federal aid would be expedited and that red tape would be cut. He said the priorities would be aid for housing, schools and businesses to generate jobs.

The President repeatedly urged the victims to keep on their spirits. There had been reports that morale among the residents had begun to sag as fear spread that substantial aid would not be forthcoming and that it would take years to rebuild. Mr. Nixon sought to assure them that this would not be the case.

"This town is not going to die. This town is going to live, as long as it's got spirit," he said.

After the drive into town, Mr. Nixon got out of the car in front of the Xenia Jail, which is being used as a command center. The day was sunny and cold and the President wore no hat, but did have on an overcoat. He was greeted by polite applause from a weary-looking crowd described by county officials as "at the end of their rope."

There were a few boos, and the police and a Secret Service agent gently pushed aside one woman who was shouting, "Im-

peach Nixon, impeach him." but generally the small crowds were polite.

Inside the jail, Mr. Nixon talked with local officials, including Mayor William Wilson, City Manager Robert Stewart and Dr. Rembert A. Stokes, president of Wilberforce University, and Dr. Lionel L. Newsom, head of Central State University. Both schools are in Wilberforce, five miles north of Xenia.

The President told the two educators of his past support for black colleges and pledged more aid to them in this disaster. Wilberforce University suffered only slight damage, but 80 per cent of Central's campus was destroyed.

Dr. Newsom later expressed to reporters the fear that a move was already underway not to rebuild Central. Gov. John J. Gilligan said last night that it would cost \$100-million to rebuild the campus and it might not be economical to do so.

From the jail, Mr. Nixon rode two blocks to the gymnasium of Shawnee Elementary School and talked briefly to 300 relief workers. He then drove two blocks to Xenia High School, which was totally destroyed. He looked at the mass of rubble where the three-story brick building once stood.

Making the tour with Mr. Nixon from Washington were James T. Lynn, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and Thomas Dunne, head of the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration. Joining the party at Wright-Patterson were Governor Gilligan and Representative Clarence J. Brown, the Republican who represents the Greene County area.

All during his visit, the President seemed to be in a good mood and at ease. He waved to the crowds and signed autographs. He greeted everyone presented by Representative Brown, and he usually had some questions and observations. He ignored the few cat-calls.

Mr. Nixon expressed concern about schools that were destroyed. Six of the county's 11 were totally wiped out.

"I talked to one youngster and he asked about rebuilding his school. I asked him if he really wanted it rebuilt and he said no," the President said, laughing. "He's an exception, though. His parents would want him back in school after he's been out a week."

Returns to Capital

WASHINGTON, April 9 (Reuters)—President Nixon returned to Washington late this afternoon.