

## Washington Wire

### A Special Weekly Report From The Wall Street Journal's Capital Bureau

**NIXON'S CREW** in the White House rallies round, despite heavy GOP defections.

The remaining loyalists react sharply to criticism of the taped conversations. They lash out at press treatment, insist the transcripts show Nixon innocent of criminal acts, contend past Presidents have been just as amoral.

"The character of the tapes relates to personality and style, not to impeachable offense," one White House man argues. Counselor Burch defends the disclosures as not showing Nixon committed a crime. "I'd just like to hear JFK's Oval Office conversations," snaps a secretary. One aide says even the possibility of "three weeks of obstruction of justice" is outweighed by past good deeds.

*Among Nixon's top appointees, only Commerce Secretary Dent leaps strongly to his defense. Other Cabinet members fall silent on Watergate.*

**NIXON HARDENS** foreign travel plans despite fresh congressional warnings.

He will probably head for the Mideast by early June. Stops are possible in as many as six countries, including hard-to-handle Syria and Algeria, to try to show that the President retains prestige. The Moscow visit is set for late June, despite doubts voiced by Democratic Sen. Byrd, GOP Sen. Weicker. Only minor accords are likely.

Watergate's general impact on foreign policy remains hard to trace. Mideast negotiations, dealings with China move along without discernible damage. Kissinger concedes that "the problem of authority" could eventually affect foreign relations but insists that he hasn't yet seen any "exorbitant proposals" from foreigners "triggered by our domestic difficulties."

**VOTER REVULSION** against politicians promises to leave governors little scathed.

Many signs show that congressional incumbents of both parties are in trouble this year. But most governors seeking reelection encounter easier going. They escape blame for Washington scandals, inflation, fuel shortages; some have cut taxes. Good bets to win: Democrats Gilligan of Ohio, Mandel of Maryland, Republicans Ray of Iowa, Sargent of Massachusetts.

Some governors emerge as dark-horse presidential or vice presidential candidates. Included: Democrats Gilligan, Walker of Illinois, Askew of Florida. Whoever becomes governor of California—whether it is the Democrats' Brown, Moretti or Alioto or the Republicans' Flournoy—will be a big force in his party.

*National party leaders pay more heed to governors. Kennedy, in Georgia the other day, heaped compliments on outgoing Gov. Carter.*

**JAWORSKI'S TEAM** gets set to throw the book at additional corporations that will be accused of illegal political contributions. Most companies charged so far have cooperated, pleaded guilty; executives got off with fines only. But Jaworski now plans to tell the courts that certain corporate defendants resisted; some executives could draw jail terms.

**GUN-CONTROL FOES** circulate a blacklist of 39 Senators and Congressmen they aim to defeat. Included: Sens. McGovern, Bayh, Ribicoff, House Democratic Leader O'Neill. The Citizens Committee for the Right to Bear Arms sets up a political fund, hoping to donate over \$50,000 to pro-gun candidates. One slogan: "Goon control, not gun control."

**CONCILIATING CONSERVATIVES:** Even the Atomic Energy Commission gets in line with Nixon's anti-impeachment strategy. When Democratic Sen. Eastland of Mississippi asked the commission for faster action in licensing a nuclear plant in his state, the request went to the staff with a note that "the President really needs Eastland."

**NIXON CRITIC** Mathias of Maryland may face a conservative challenger in September's Senate Republican primary. Maritime Commission Chairman Helen Bentley, a Nixon loyalist, considers opposing him. Conservatives contend Mathias is vulnerable in the primary because many Maryland Republicans resent his liberal stands.

**"SLUMP-FLATION"** sets economic planners groping. No new policy line emerges.

Nixon participates more actively in a "rolling reassessment" of the economic outlook. He will probably unveil plans to spur home building today, but they won't be dramatic. White House economists worry more about inflation than the slump; they seem less sure that price rises will ease later this year. Cost of Living Council Director Dunlop is pessimistic.

One anti-inflation idea broached: a slash in federal spending for next fiscal year, perhaps enough to wipe out the projected \$9.4 billion deficit. But policymakers can't agree on where to cut. The rival camps of Treasury Chief Simon and OMB Boss Ash eye each other suspiciously, although steps toward detente begin.

*An added economic problem: Some officials seriously fear a new truck strike starting Sunday night. They don't see how they can meet demands for lower fuel prices or higher speed limits.*

**MINOR MEMOS:** Confessed Watergate conspirator Jeb Magruder, greeted recently by an old acquaintance as "looking good," answered, "Yeah, I'm getting in shape to go to prison." . . . Former Democratic Chairman O'Brien has finished a volume of memoirs titled "No Final Victories: A Life in Politics from JFK to Watergate." . . . Backers of a Republican candidate in California distribute cards picturing a mournful-looking St. Bernard and reading "Heidi, our underdog, is full of good cheer about Republican prospects this year!" . . . The energy problem produces new government jargon; fuel conservers speak of removing lights in buildings as "delamping."