

'Cocktails With Clawson'— Perhaps Best Show in Town

By Don Bacon
Newhouse News Service

Room 160 of the Old executive Office Building is an unlikely arena for President Nixon's small band of defenders to be waging their fight to keep him in office.

Yet here is where a main thrust of Mr. Nixon's defense is taking place. In this well-appointed, high-ceilinged room, overlooking the White House, the President's most zealous and ar-

ticulate defenders have been gathering almost daily in the late afternoon to argue the President's case with an invitation-only audience of reporters, who convey it to the public.

Apparently lacking substantive evidence that will exonerate him before Congress and the courts, Mr. Nixon has been turning increasingly to the public as his ultimate jurors. His unusual interview this past

week with conservative columnist James J. Kilpatrick was half an explanation of the Nixon view of impeachment and resignation, half an appeal to the public.

The one and two-a-day "news briefings" in Room 160 of the Executive Office Building are the brainchild of the chief entrepreneur of White House propaganda,

See CLAWSON, G4, Col. 1



KEN W. CLAWSON
... the engineer

CLAWSON, From G1

Ken W. Clawson, a former reporter for Mr. Nixon's journalistic nemesis, The Washington Post. Clawson, who knows the strengths and weaknesses of the press better than anyone else around Mr. Nixon, has helped greatly to open up the White House to reporters since he was named Director of Communication in mid-January. That has been a worthwhile contribution, as far as the press and public are concerned, but Clawson, himself remains a controversial and not-entirely trusted figure in the White House press room.

His main job, Clawson says, is to see that the President's and the Administration's point of view is laid out in the press, including

television. He expresses outrage and tends to threaten alleged offenders when that point of view is ignored or inadequately, in his opinion, presented. He has been known to phone Walter Cronkite in the middle of a broadcast to demand that White House comment on a particular story be aired before the broadcast ends.

The Clawson-arranged news briefings have been the source of most of the White House defense of the President's edited Watergate transcripts. The sessions are on-the-record and free-swinging. For the past two weeks, he has brought forward a succession of key White House staff members—including Counsellors Ann Armstrong and Dean Burch, speechwriter Patrick J. Bu-



REV. JOHN McLAUGHLIN
... speaks on morality

chanan, Chief Watergate Counsel James D. St. Clair and even Father John McLaughlin to defend the



ANNE ARMSTRONG
... a defender

President's version of Watergate and the cover-up. Perhaps the most unusual session—maybe the most un-