

Romney Plan for 'Truth-Seeking'

Washington Post Service

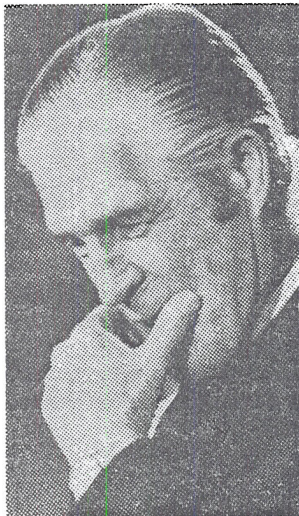
Washington

George Romney resigned from the administration yesterday and said he would form a new citizens' coalition of "truth-seekers and communicators" who will define "the real issues" confronting the country.

Romney, secretary of Housing and Urban Development, disclosed he had told President Nixon in his resignation letter written two days after the election that candidates avoid taking specific positions "for fear of offending uninformed voters and thus losing votes."

"As a result," Romney wrote the President on November 9, "elections and candidates seldom focus adequately on those vital issues concerning which the electorate must be knowledgeable if needed reform is to occur without a crisis."

At a press conference yesterday, Romney attributed this view to his new "understanding" of American politics in general and not to the



UPI Photo

GEORGE ROMNEY
'The real issues'

campaign between President Nixon and Senator George S. McGovern.

But asked how he felt about the contest between them, he said, "I don't think the issues were discussed in this campaign, no."

RESIGNATION

Romney will remain until a new secretary is chosen by President Nixon and confirmed by the Senate sometime next year. His resignation is the first in the post-election period to be publicly accepted by the President.

In a "Dear George" letter, Mr. Nixon said Romney's departure "is a source of special regret to me." Mr. Nixon credited him with helping the housing industry set "all-time records" in producing homes in the past two years.

Romney was vague in de-

See Back Page

ROMNEY PLAN

From Page 1

scribing what his new "coalition of concerned citizens" will do or how it will be formed. It might be a new organization, he said, or it might be built on some existing organizations. It will not be merely a public lobby modeled on John W. Gardner's Common Cause, he said.

In his letter to the President, Romney said that "the nation needs a coalition of concerned citizens dedicated to defining such issues, assembling the relevant, provable facts, identifying the alternate solutions or solution, and communicating their findings to the people."

"Such a body of truth-seekers and communicators," he said, "could create an enlightened electorate so that the parties and their candidates would find it to their advantage to seek voter support on the basis of the real issues rather than appealing to public and frequently superficial concerns of the moment."

A former governor of Michigan and briefly a can-

didate for the Republican presidential nomination in 1968, Romney said he had long been disturbed by the failure of politicians to discuss what he called the "real issues."

He produced copies of a letter he wrote in October 1960 to Mr. Nixon and John F. Kennedy, complaining they were ignoring such issues as the concentration of power in unions and corporations and hunger in the world.

Since then, Romney said, he has come to understand that the political party system inevitably limits discussion of "real issues" because the candidates fear losing votes by taking specific positions.

He quoted from a book, "The Public Philosophy," in which Walter Lippmann said "politicians cannot afford to be right too soon and win."

"I'm a living example of that," Romney said, claiming that the press never understood his position on Vietnam during his brief 1968 campaign and that he had thus been "washed out."