

TV Editorial

Ziegler's Chat With TV Critic

Washington

ABC News anchorman Howard K. Smith said yesterday that White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler called him over to the White House after he had editorially urged that President Nixon resign or be impeached.

"He (Ziegler) explained their viewpoint — in sorrow, not in anger — and I just found no reason to change what I thought," Smith said in a telephone interview. He said he didn't regard Ziegler's action as any sort of attempt at pressuring him.

Smith's call for Mr. Nixon's resignation or impeachment came Wednesday night during the anchorman's segment of commentary on the "ABC Evening News."

MESSAGE

In it, he said the disclosure that two key White House tape recordings sought in the Watergate investigation don't exist "deepens suspicions inevitably that there has been a cover-up all along and it is still going on."

Noting the resignations and indictments of key members of the Nixon administration, Smith's commentary said: "I think it is not excessive to say that we have been put through too much.

"Either the Congress or the President, by his own patriotic decision, should re-

lieve us of a burden too heavy to carry any longer."

Smith said the intent of his commentary was to urge Mr. Nixon's resignation or to recommend that Congress impeach him if he failed to resign.

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The morning after the broadcast, he said in response to a query, Ziegler called him and "asked me to come to the White House and just listen to him. I told him that I was busy.

"He said, 'Please come in.' So I went in," Smith said, adding that Ziegler asked him to keep their conversation "off the record" and he agreed.

"So I can't tell the details, but there is nothing new to tell," Smith said.

Asked whether he considered it an attempt at pressure, Smith said: "No. I think he wanted to bounce his argument off somebody in person. I think that's all.

"And he bounced it off me, and I did not find anything new in it. I frankly felt sorry for him, but it didn't change anything."

Did Ziegler say he was speaking on behalf of Mr. Nixon or himself?

"He didn't say, but he'd just come from a meeting with the President and I had to wait 15 minutes for him," Smith said.

Our Correspondent