



It's a Question of National Survival

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SUITABLE PUNISHMENT of the Watergate horrors is certainly desirable; yet this is not, cannot and should not be an absolute first priority for sane Americans. The first priorities have to be national survival and a reasonable measure of national success.

These gloomily practical reminders are now in order because of a new political fact that needs to be squarely faced. The gradual changes on Capitol Hill have begun to make an impeachment proceeding more and more likely. And if the House of Representatives eventually votes a bill of impeachment, the Senate will hardly dispose of the problem until the summer of 1976!

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THE FACTUAL BASIS for this ghastly forecast is unfortunately genuine and solid. The President has already been warned by his own staff that the House Judiciary Committee must be expected to drag out its independent inquiry into the Watergate horrors until late October, 1974.

The wisest congressional leaders, both Democratic and Republican, regrettably agree with this estimate by the White House staff. Furthermore, this kind of protracted public investigation, with the Watergate horrors never out of the headlines, will most probably lead to a pro-impeachment committee report, and a House vote for a bill of impeachment by a narrow majority.

So there you have the first stage, with almost a year of inquiry by the House Ju-

diary Committee a near-certainty, and a House vote for a bill of impeachment a better-than-even bet. As to the time the Senate will need to give all the senatorial egos a proper run in the yard, and then to vote impeachment up or down, this is no bet. It is another near-certainty.

The Senate's Democratic majority is heavy, and may well increase in 1974. Only a wild optimist can suppose the Senate will deal with a bill of impeachment until a few months prior to the next presidential election.

It is this dreadful prospect, in turn, that has produced the clear possibility that the President will resign. That possibility is now beginning to be accepted in the White House staff itself.

It is true that more and more people in the country plainly want to get the Watergate horrors over and done with, one way or the other.

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YOU HAVE, then, two questions to answer. The first is obviously: Will the President indeed end by resigning, to spare the country such an ordeal? The second is: Will the U.S. survive if he does not resign, and an impeachment proceeding then occupies the whole balance of Richard M. Nixon's term of office?

Does anyone feel sure we can survive three years with a President crippled by incessant inquiry and incessant attack? Yet how does anyone suggest we can elude this risk, except by the President's own decision?