

... Or the Beginning of a Movement?

As one Republican leader after another calls for the President's resignation, we are seeing the penalties of that arrogance of power assessed against the beleaguered occupant of the White House. That arrogance, to the point of complete insensitivity to anyone outside the inner circle, is illustrated ad nauseam in the transcripts of the conversations released by the White House.

Defenders of the Nixon faith seek at times to give the impression of a President victimized by a little group of high binders responsible to no one. But it was the President himself who picked these men and who expressed his complete loyalty in them until he was forced by circumstances to remove them.

Sen. Hugh Scott (R-Pa.), the minority leader, had a sharper experience of the White House arrogance than perhaps any other Republican leader. A reasonable, moderate man, Scott made several valiant efforts to help the President out of the pit and was slapped down for his pains.

A day or two before the first session of Congress in January 1973, Scott got

a call from H. R. Haldeman. We want to replace you as minority leader, Haldeman told Scott. We don't think you're up to the job.

Scott was astounded. Here was the second or third most powerful man in the executive branch telling the leader of his party in the legislative branch that he meant to shove him aside. Where was the separation of powers that so much has been heard about since Watergate broke?

Scott demanded to know for whom Haldeman was speaking. Was it the President? The answer was that John Ehrlichman concurred in the decision. That seemed to Haldeman to certify the fact that Scott was to be hustled off stage.

The minority leader then demanded to see the President to ask him directly if this represented his view. Not until 10 days later was he given an appointment. By that time Republicans in the Senate had re-elected Scott and so, as the lawyers say, the question was moot. But the sting remained.

One of the characterizations deleted

from the transcript, it has been widely reported, was of Scott as a snivelling S.O.B. Small wonder that after having so long given his loyalty he should have come out with his denunciation of "a shabby, disgusting, immoral performance" by all concerned as revealed in the transcripts released by the White House.

Scott is no run-of-the-mine politician. He is an authority on Oriental art with one of the finest private collections in the country. The mean, self-centered conspiratorial nature of the conversations deeply offended him, as it did thousands of others across the country.

Such is the strange nature of this moment in history that three days after he made his statement Scott went down to the White House for a leadership meeting. He sat on the President's right for a discussion of the economy and what to do about it. In a session of at least two hours, not a word was said about Watergate or Scott's statement.

Scott's colleague from Pennsylvania, Sen. Richard S. Schweiker, also called for the President's resignation. Up for re-election this year, Schweiker, with

Scott taking the lead, was trying to get clear of the Watergate ruin. Schweiker is regarded by both Democrats and Republicans as one of the abler younger senators serving his first term.

Talk on Capitol Hill is of the crescendo effect if others in a similar bind decide the time has come to cut loose from any involvement with a President so deeply mired in Watergate and the related charges. Sen. Peter Dominick of Colorado, for example, faces a serious challenge in a state that two years ago repudiated former Sen. Gordon Allott. But whether such consistent Nixon loyalists and hard liners as Dominick can change their spots at this late date is questionable.

Repeated statements from the White House that Nixon will neither resign nor take advantage of the provision in the 25th Amendment allowing him to step aside temporarily seems only to increase the doubts among Republicans in Congress. So often he has said that he was committed beyond any question to one course only to follow the directly opposite course a little later.