

Big Resignation
Flurry - Nixon,
GOP Leaders Meet

Scott Says 'Situation Gloomy'

Washington

Three Republican leaders indicated yesterday that President Nixon is considering the possibility of resignation and said his decision would be based on the "national interest."

The President's state of mind was described late yesterday afternoon by Senate Republican leader Hugh Scott, Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona and House Republican leader John J. Rhodes of Arizona after a 30-minute meeting with Mr. Nixon in the Oval Office.

They met with Mr. Nixon as members of the White House staff said a movement is underway within the staff to persuade the President to resign. And pressure for resignation continued to grow in Congress.

(United Press International last night quoted a source close to Mr. Nixon's aides as saying the President has begun work on a resignation statement.)

After the meeting, the three congressional leaders told reporters on the White House lawn that they had come at the President's invitation to discuss the impeachment situation.

"We have told him the situation is very gloomy on Capitol Hill," said Scott, adding that they did not advise him what to do.

"No decision has been made," Scott said.

Rhodes, who announced Tuesday that he would vote for impeachment, said, "the President was in good spirits and good health, and as four old friends we talked over a very distressing situation."

Later, back on Capitol Hill, Scott said the President had his feet on his desk throughout the meeting and he told all three that he wanted

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their assessment on impeachment and conviction but not to discuss "collateral issues," presumably referring to congressional moves to offer the president immunity from conviction should he resign.

All three, Scott said, told the President the situation was "gloomy."

"He asked me," Scott said, "I said, 'gloomy.' He said, 'damn gloomy?' I said, 'yes, sir.'"

Scott added: "I think the situation will be resolved in a few days."

The meeting followed a confused day of rumors that Mr. Nixon was on the verge of resigning, while the President, in seclusion with a few members of his staff and his family, maintained his public posture that he would not resign, but would let the constitutional process of impeachment run its course.

There were a number of indications, however, that the President has told a number of persons that he, indeed, is considering resigning.

Members of the White House staff said privately that the movement within the staff to persuade Mr. Nixon to resign is led by Alexander M. Haig Jr., the President's chief of staff.

On the other hand, the President's family, who stayed with Mr. Nixon in his White House offices during what was described as "a day of agony" for all of them, urged Mr. Nixon not to resign.

Rabbi Baruch Korff, chairman of the National

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Citizens' Committee for Fairness to the Presidency, emerged from an afternoon meeting with the President with a grim face, and subsequently issued a statement saying that unless the White House is flooded with telegram against resignation in the next few days, Mr. Nixon "may resign in the national interest." Rabbi Korff has led a grass roots citizen's movement against impeachment and has repeatedly urged Nixon not to resign.

What emerged at the end of the day was a president faced with almost certain removal from office, torn between his own stated inclination of clinging to office until the last, and the advice of his staff and former political supporters to quit and turn the administration over the Vice President Gerald Ford.

All day long, the White House staff seemed to be in disarray and Mr. Nixon spent hours alternately between his oval office and his office in the executive office building, conferring with Haig and others.

For some days a number of Mr. Nixon's staff members, including Patrick J. Buchanan, a speech writer who has been with him since 1966, have been recommending resignation. But one person close to the White House said yesterday that resignation pressure from within the staff "was made potent and respectful" by the fact that Haig, who heads the

staff, was actively promoting resignation. Haig did not respond to telephone calls for comment.

James D. St. Clair, the President's chief defense counsel, was asked by reporters at the U.S. courthouse here whether Mr. Nixon would resign.

"I have no knowledge that the President plans to resign," he said.

The fact that Mr. Nixon met with the Republican congressional leaders was an indication that Mr. Nixon may be leaning to resignation rather than going through the impeachment vote in the House and a painful Senate trial. He had not seen or talked to a member of Congress since he returned to Washington from San Clemente almost two weeks ago, and just Tuesday he told his cabinet that his mind was set against resigning.

"He invited us down this afternoon to disclose to him the actual situation in the House and Senate regarding his position," Goldwater said after the meeting. However, Republican leaders for some time had been expressing a desire to see the President and were mystified by his seclusion.

"We were extremely impressed," Goldwater said, "with the uppermost thought on his mind which is that whatever decision is made will be in the national interest. No decision has been made. We made no suggestions."

The congressional leaders denied reports that they delivered to Mr. Nixon a draft of legislation they were prepared to introduce giving the President immunity against prosecution should he resign.

"No, that subject was not touched on," Rhodes said. And as to resignation, Scott said, "that question did not even come up."

Goldwater later told newsmen he advised the President that he could count on no more than 15 votes for acquittal if he was impeached by the House and tried by the Senate.

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