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3 Republican Governors Score Nixon

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— Three major Republican governors today expressed strong dissatisfaction with President Nixon's explanation of his role in the Watergate case and warned that serious political trouble may be in store.

Michigan Gov. William G. Milliken, former head of the Republican Governors' Association, said "it is possible" the President may be forced to resign. Massachusetts Gov. Francis W. Sargent and Washington Gov. Daniel J. Evans rejected that as unlikely, but both said in strong terms that Mr. Nixon's statements so far on the political espionage case and its cover-up have not been adequate.

The Republican state executives spoke out in separate interviews, as Vice President Spiro T. Agnew arrived at the National Governors' Conference on a last-minute visit. Agnew told reporters his purpose was to "make friends and end tensions" for the administration, but said there "won't be any discussion of Watergate" on his part.

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GOVERNORS, From A1

The second day of the annual meeting of governors included lengthy formal sessions on energy problems, education financing and welfare and social services reforms. But the increasingly vocal Republican demand for clarification of Mr. Nixon's role in the Watergate affair overrode all other issues.

Since their meeting in New York a month ago, at which the Republican governors expressed unanimous condemnation of the break-in at the Democratic headquarters and unanimous faith in the President's ability to prove his own innocence, they have obviously had serious second thoughts.

Virginia Gov. Linwood Holton, chairman of the GOP Caucus, signaled the shift two days ago by calling publicly on Mr. Nixon to hold a series of press conferences to resolve unanswered questions on Watergate.

Today, Michigan's Milliken, who was Holton's predecessor as caucus chairman, told reporters that "if there is anything that remains unsaid or unknown, he (Mr. Nixon) ought to say it now—no matter how painful or destructive it may be to him personally."

Asked about Monday's

suggestion by Wisconsin's Democratic Gov. Patrick J. Lucey that the President consider resigning for the good of the country, Milliken surprisingly said "It is possible. It may come to that. I don't see it now," he said, "but it depends how closely it gets tied to him. It's getting close, very close."

Milliken complained of the White House policy of "dribbling out a little bit" of additional information at frequent intervals. "How much better it would be if they just laid the record bare. If you want to destroy confidence and credibility," he said, "the Watergate way is the way to do it."

That same view was expressed by Evans, the three-term Washington governor who was keynoter of the 1968 Republican National Convention and is scheduled to become chairman of the National Governors Conference Wednesday.

"Good grief, it's painful," he said. "I wince every time there's a new statement from the White House."

"I want to believe the President," said Evans, who has been perhaps the strongest advocate within the conference of Mr. Nixon's new federalism programs. "But I find myself becoming more and more distressed every day as new information comes out."

"We need a full laying out of what the President knows," the governor continued. "I agree with Lin Holton. It should be obvious to the President that his series of statements has not been sufficient. They are not believable, because the tight ring of security prevents any questions being asked."

Evans said that even if Mr. Nixon had been a party to a cover-up through election day of last year, he could have made "a totally clean break, even then, and

Watergate would have been a thing of the past by now.

"For all the President's political acumen," he said, "he really hasn't used it very much in this affair."

Evans said he thought the stock market slump and the decline of the dollar reflected lack of confidence in the President, and urged both Senate investigators and Mr. Nixon to deal with the root cause of the suspicions. "What's needed now is total candor and speed," he said. "we simply cannot allow this to be managed for anyone's political gain."

The third of the three Republican governors to speak out today, Massachusetts' Sargent, called the resignation talk "a frightening prospect. I hope we don't come to that."

But Sargent added that "It's obvious he (Mr. Nixon) is in a helluva jam—no question about it. It's a difficult thing for the President to answer these questions, but he's going to have to try. If he'd done that way back, if it had been a much more open administration, he'd be a lot better off now. He must feel cornered."

Asked if he thought Mr. Nixon still had time to regain the lost confidence, Sargent—a frequent critic of the administration's domestic policies and the chief executive of the only state Mr. Nixon did not carry last November—said, "I don't think he'd make out in Massachusetts. I don't know about the rest of the country."

Democratic governors continued to maintain a general silence on the issue, letting the Republicans hold the spotlight. But Illinois Gov. Dan Walker and Maryland's Gov. Marvin Mandel both talked of a "creeping paralysis" of governmental decision-making because of Watergate.

"The President has to disclose what he knows and bring this to a head," Mandel said, "and let government operate as it should."

And Evans, who succeeds Mandel as conference chairman, echoed that view, saying he would ask Agnew to tell the President, "For heaven's sake, let's get it out and over with."

In another political development here, Oregon Gov. Tom McCall said he was considering leaving the Republican Party and running for the Senate seat now held by Republican Robert Packwood as a Democrat or independent. McCall, considered a maverick within his own party, said he would make his decision known by September. Among the reasons he cited for his tentative switch of party allegiance were the Watergate scandal and the party alignment in his home state. McCall said he had polls showing he could beat Packwood.

In their formal work session, the governors had some sharp words for Frank C. Carlucci, under secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Several Democratic governors seized on the occasion to criticize the Nixon administration for the regulations which govern the Social Services Program and for not informing the states of how much money the Nixon administration is willing to devote to welfare.