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Resignation Talk Spreads As Congress Reconvenes

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 21—The House Democratic leader, Representative Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. of Massachusetts, said today that President Nixon's resignation "would be in the best interest of the nation economically."

Others in the House joined Mr. O'Neill in suggesting that the President step down voluntarily rather than face impeachment proceedings. But senior Democrats and Republicans differed publicly with Mr. O'Neill or called his statement premature.

The resignation talk spread on Capitol Hill as the 93d Congress returned from a month-long recess to face up to the two central issues—President Nixon's tenure in office and the energy shortage—left dangling last year.

Results of Poll

A new Gallup Poll showed that while a majority of Americans were opposed to the impeachment of the President, the nation was evenly divided on the desirability of Mr. Nixon's resignation.

The President's younger daughter, Mrs. David Eisenhower, said in an interview in the February issue of McCall's magazine that her father should resign if he was involved in the Watergate scandal but that she was confident "he hasn't done anything wrong."

The resignation discussion appeared to be an outgrowth of a comment Friday by Representative Wilbur D. Mills, Democrat of Arkansas, that Mr. Nixon should consider resigning "in the near future" rather than subject the nation to an impeachment proceeding.

Mr. Mills is chairman of the Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation, which is examining President Nixon's recent tax returns.

Mr. O'Neill told newsmen just before the House convened at noon that he believed the President had "lost the credibility of the nation" and that

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"we'd be better off" with Vice President Ford in the White House.

Speaker Carl L. Albert of Oklahoma, the senior Democrat in the House, refused to comment on the resignation issue. He said he would "have to think a long time before I'd recommend to the President that he resign."

Citing deep cynicism among their constituents, others in the House said that their travels to their home districts during the year-end recess had persuaded them that there was a

crisis of confidence in the Government.

Representative Lucien N. Nedzi, Democrat of Michigan, showed several colleagues a public opinion questionnaire he had received from one constituent.

In reply to the question, "Do you approve of the over-all record of the Nixon Administration?" The constituent had printed: "Ha, Ha, Ha."

Representative Robert F. Drinan, Democrat of Massachusetts, a Roman Catholic priest, said that a voter in his district had sent him a message stating, "If you can't impeach him, exorcise him."

Representative John J. McFall, the House Democratic whip, and Representative John J. Rhodes, the House Republican leader, said that any resignation suggestions were "premature" until the House Judiciary Committee determined whether Mr. Nixon might have committed impeachable offenses.

But Representative Jack Brooks, Democrat of Texas who is a member of the Judiciary Committee, said he believed a majority in Congress "would feel a lot better about it if the President resigned, although it wouldn't be in the partisan interest of the Democrats if he did it."

Anderson Opposed

Representative John B. Anderson of Illinois, the chairman of the House Republican Conference, described his colleagues as "wistfully" focusing on resignation and said he was opposed to it.

Mr. Anderson said that Congress had the constitutional means, through the impeachment process, of removing or clearing the President, and he added, "It's a Republican problem and we can't turn aside from it."

Mrs. Eisenhower disclosed last July that the President had discussed resignation with his family about two months earlier. At the time, the White House said that the conversa-

tion was not a serious one. Recalling it in the McCall interview, Mrs. Eisenhower said:

"The family said what would be the good of resigning if he were innocent. The way he looked at it for a while is that he wanted to do what's best for the country, and if resigning would clear things up and make things better, that's what he wanted to do, he said."

The President's daughter said that he would never "bug out, so to speak" if that would "indicate an admission of wrongdoing, and he hasn't done anything wrong. I think he would be making a mistake to resign."

According to the most recent Gallup opinion sampling, based on interviews with 1,504 adults between Jan. 4 and 7, 46 per cent answered "Yes" and 46 per cent said "No" when asked, "Do you think President Nixon should resign from the Presidency or not?" The remaining 8 per cent had no opinion.

Asked if Mr. Nixon "should be impeached and compelled to leave the Presidency or not," 53 per cent replied "No" and 37 per cent said "Yes," with 10 per cent expressing no opinion.



President Nixon meeting with Speaker Carl Albert, left, Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield and Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott, right. At the rear is John A.

Scali, left, U.S. representative to the United Nations, and Thomas C. Korologos and Max L. Friedersdorf, obscured, Presidential aides. Mr. Nixon began sixth year in office.

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