

Congress' Call for New Prosecutor

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Washington

Congress, prodded by Republican members, pressed yesterday for the appointment of an independent prosecutor to take charge of the Nixon administration's Watergate investigation.

The Senate adopted a resolution, drafted by Charles H. Percy (Rep.-Ill.), urging President Nixon to seek Senate confirmation of a nominee "of the highest character and integrity from outside the executive branch to serve as special prosecutor."

Eighteen Republicans in the House, including two of the party leaders, introduced a similar resolution calling on Elliot L. Richardson, the attorney general designate, to immediately use the authority President Nixon gave him Monday to appoint an impartial prosecutor.

SKEPTICISM

The Republican moves reflected widespread skepticism on Capitol Hill that the initiatives Mr. Nixon took

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Monday — shaking up his administration's hierarchy pledging to the nation that "justice will be pursued, fully and fairly" — would suffice to restore public confidence in the integrity of the government.

The Democratic chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Peter W. Rodino Jr. (Dem.-N.J.), said he would seek legislation to enable Congress to "remove entirely from the presidency" the responsibility for investigating the Watergate case.

Representative John E. Moss (Dem.-Calif.) said that neither the President's actions nor the judgment of House leaders that he was acting "prematurely" would deter him from seeking a formal House inquiry into the possibility of impeachment proceedings against the President.

SUPPORT

Democratic leaders of Congress were, for the most part, inclined to support Mr. Nixon and accept his guarantee that there would be "no whitewash at the White House."

Senate Democratic leader Mike Mansfield said that prior to Mr. Nixon's actions "the American system was being undermined" but that "the undermining has now been stopped. Now the foundation can be rebuilt, perhaps stronger."

Percy declared on the Senate floor that he had delayed introduction of his resolution calling for an impartial prosecutor until he had heard Mr. Nixon's address Monday night.

The President said he had given Richardson authority to appoint such a supervising investigator if Richardson thought it appropriate.

ISSUE

"Now that the President has spoken," Percy said, "I remain convinced that the introduction of this resolution is appropriate. A simple and very basic question is at issue: should the executive branch investigate itself? I do not think so."

Percy said that he agreed



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CHARLES PERCY
Resolution passed Senate

with Mr. Nixon that it was time to turn from preoccupation with the Watergate case and "get on with the important task of governing." But, he added:

"Let us remember that we cannot govern unless we have the support of the people."

Only three other senators were present when Percy's resolution was adopted unanimously by voice vote. They were Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia, the Democratic whip, John Sparkman (Dem.-Ala.) and Pete V. Domenici (Rep.-N.M.).

Ten Republicans and four Democrats had previously added their names as co-sponsors.

Hours later bitter debate broke out when other Senators heard of the resolution and returned to the floor.

His voice cracking in anger, Senator George A. Aiken of Vermont, dean of Senate Republicans, accused Percy of conducting a "contemptible operation" in shepherding the resolution through without debate or a roll call vote while most senators were attending caucus luncheons.

The House resolution was introduced by Representatives John B. Anderson of Illinois, the chairman of the House Republican Conference; Robert H. Michel of Illinois, the chairman of the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee, and 16 of their Republican colleagues.