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**LEADERS IN CONGRESS SEE
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CHALLENGE POSED

Figures in 2 Parties Critical — Support by Conservatives

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 21—Congressional leaders of both parties said today that Congress would have to begin looking immediately at the question of impeaching President Nixon.

No one was willing to predict that Mr. Nixon would be removed from office, but a consensus seemed to be developing among Democrats and some Republicans that the President had challenged Congress and that Congress would have to accept the challenge.

"I don't think the President has left us any other choice," said Senator Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia, the assistant Democratic leader in the Senate.

The majority leader in the House, Representative Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. of Massachusetts, said that he had talked with many colleagues over the weekend and that "we've all talked about impeachment."

Mr. Nixon had considerable support among conservative Republicans. Senator John G. Tower of Texas, chairman of the Senate Republican Policy Committee, said that he thought the President had acted properly "to forestall a constitutional crisis" and added that he did not believe there were grounds for impeachment.

Representative Gerald R. Ford of Michigan, the House Republican leader, who has been nominated by the President to suc-

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ceed Spiro T. Agnew as Vice President, said that he felt Mr. Nixon had "no other choice" but to dismiss the Watergate special prosecutor, Archibald Cox. Mr. Cox, Mr. Ford remarked, "was after all, a subordinate" who defied an order.

But other Republicans were less generous toward Mr. Nixon. Representative John B. Anderson of Illinois, the third-ranking House Republican, predicted last night that "impeachment resolutions are going to be raining down like hailstones."

Senator Charles McC. Mathias, Republican of Maryland, said that the President's actions had raised "very serious questions" and that "Congress is going to have to explore them immediately and aggressively."

Senator Mathias, Senator Byrd and many others agreed that Congressional confirmation of Mr. Ford's nomination would now be delayed.

"The Congress has got to feel that these crucial questions of insuring that a government of laws continues [are] so much more important than personalities" that it will put aside the Ford nomination, at least temporarily, Mr. Mathias said.

Many Congressional leaders could not be reached.

Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, the Republican leader in the Senate, was said by an aide to be unavailable "in the hinterlands of Pennsylvania."

Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, the Democratic leader, was on his way to a conference of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Turkey, and Senator Barry Goldwater, Republican of Arizona, was reported to be resting on the Eastern Shore of Maryland without a telephone.

Speaker Carl Albert of Oklahoma, who is next in line to become President, would not accept telephone calls. A Secret Service agent at his apartment here said that Mr. Albert had left instructions that all calls be turned aside.

Republican leaders outside of Washington were silent. Gov. Ronald Reagan of California, former Gov. John P. Connally of Texas and Governor Rockefeller of New York all refused to comment.

About a dozen members of the House announced that they would submit one form or another of an impeachment resolution when the House convenes

again Tuesday.

Under the Constitution, impeachment proceedings begin in the House. If the House, by a majority vote, decides that a President should be impeached—comparable to a grand jury indictment—the case goes to the Senate. The Senate then becomes a court to try the case against the President. A two-thirds majority of those voting is required to convict a President, thus removing him from office.

The initial investigation of accusations against Mr. Nixon could be performed by the House Judiciary Committee or by a special committee set up to conduct the inquiry. The Judiciary Committee chairman, Representative Peter W. Rodino, Jr. of New Jersey, could not be reached.

Representative B. F. Sisk, Democrat of California, plans to offer a resolution that would create a select committee to look into impeachment. He said that Mr. Nixon's "actions raise real questions to me of whether or not he's thinking straight."

Senator Edmund E. Muskie, Democrat of Maine, who, with Senator Mathias, was interviewed on television by the American Broadcasting Company, declared that "one forum is left that in my judgment is adequate, and that is the impeachment process."

Senator Howard H. Baker Jr. of Tennessee, the ranking Republican on the Senate Watergate committee, said that he was baffled by President Nixon's actions and predicted that they would "almost inevitably heighten tensions and conflict."

Senator Byrd said there was "no way to avoid the assumption" that there was something on the White House tapes that President Nixon was trying to hide.

In Colorado, Representative Patricia Schroeder, a Democrat, asked her constituents in Denver to call her office to say whether they thought the impeachment process should be begun against Mr. Nixon. By tonight, an aide reported, there were 2,500 calls for impeachment and 32 against.

Senator John C. Stennis, who agreed to monitor the tape recordings and to verify that the President's "statement" on them was accurate, spent much of this afternoon at his office in the Capitol.

Tonight, Mr. Stennis said that he was sorry that Mr. Cox had been discharged and that

the Attorney General, Elliot L. Richardson, had resigned. Mr. Stennis said that he had agreed to serve as a bridge between the White House and the Senate Watergate committee. No one at the White House told him, Mr. Stennis said, that his acceptance of the role would lead to the dismissal of Mr. Cox.