

# The President's abrupt moves

IN HIS ABRUPT DISMISSAL of Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox, President Nixon provoked a national crisis of the gravest kind.

He dismayed the country, including many who have supported him in the past.

He aroused genuine fears in some quarters that he does, indeed, believe he is above the law. The Agnew experience should convince him of the fallacy of entertaining such thoughts, if indeed he does.

However, if President Nixon was unwise and imprudent in his handling of the tape controversy — and we believe he was — those who now cry for his impeachment are equally unwise and imprudent in their actions.

LET US EXAMINE the consequences of impeachment proceedings at this time.

Despite substantial progress over the weekend, the Middle East remains a tinder-box. It could erupt again at any time.

If the war is contained and serious peace negotiations do begin, much credit must go to President Nixon. If he is to continue playing a role in resolving this explosive situation, he cannot have his power clouded by impeachment proceedings.

This, then, is one strong argument for postponing such action. Another concerns the line of succession.

The resignation of Vice President Agnew was a traumatic experience for our nation. It also left a void in a critical position at a critical time in history. The man proposed for his replacement has not been confirmed.

Thus, if proceedings were now launched to impeach Mr. Nixon, the Congress would be faced with the realization that House Speaker Carl Albert, a Democrat, would be his successor.

This circumstance would compound a situation already most complex and difficult.

IT IS HIGHLY QUESTIONABLE that a two-thirds vote could be mustered for impeachment under any circumstances. The effort would almost surely be doomed to disaster if undertaken with the existing partisan problems of naming a Democrat to succeed a Republican President.

Thus, the nation would be exposed to months of destructive debates. The business of government would grind to a halt and our nation would be weakened nationally and internationally.

This is an hour for cool heads. An hour for decisions based on reason rather than emotion. We urge two immediate courses of action.

- Let Congress move expeditiously to complete the investigation of Gerald Ford, the nominee for the Vice Presidency.

- Let Senator Stennis move expeditiously to review the controversial tapes and supply his findings to the courts, the Congress and the public.

On the basis of the revelations of the tapes, let Congress then decide whether impeachment proceedings are indicated.

WHILE CONGRESS and the public, generally, are indignant over the President's seemingly harsh handling of Cox, it must also be recognized that had he submitted to the demands of the courts, the precedent would have been locked in the records and could have plagued and weakened future administrations.

We believe the move to allow Senator Stennis to act as a surrogate for the courts and the public was wise. We regret that it was not made months ago. The traumatic events of the past week-end might then have been avoided.