

CLERICS QUESTION FITNESS OF NIXON

President's Actions Scored
in Statements by Five

By **GEORGE DUGAN**

Five American religious leaders have issued statements criticizing President Nixon's actions in the Watergate case in the last week.

Some of the statements, which were issued independently, questioned the President's fitness to hold office while some voiced shock and dismay at his dismissal of Archibald Cox as special Watergate prosecutor and expressed concern over the future of America's judicial procedures.

The five leaders are the Rev. Dr. W. Sterling Cary, president of the National Council of Espy, the council's general secretary; the Most. Rev. James S. Rausch, general secretary of Churches; Dr. R. K. Edwin the United States Catholic Conference; the Right Rev. Paul Moore Jr., Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New York, and Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

The National Council of Churches is a federation of 31 Protestant and Eastern Orthodox denominations, and the Hebrew Union represents 710 Reform Jewish synagogues with a membership of more than one million congregants.

Dr. Cary and Dr. Espy, in a joint statement, called upon Congress to "examine the President's fitness to remain in office and to do so before the rapidly corroding moral temper of our nation gives way to utter disillusionment."

"The dismissal of special Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox presents the nation with a moral issue of highest magnitude and one which demands a response," they said.

Support for Courts

The two churchmen said that the courts, as protectors of American liberties, "should not be deprived of their essential function under the separa-

tion of powers."

Bishop Rausch said that the American system of law and orderly procedure: "must be given the opportunity to function without obstruction or unreasonable pressure in a spirit of calm and judicial commitment to the national interest."

"This is not a moment," Bishop Rausch said, "for partisanship, hysteria or hasty action."

Bishop Moore said that he had been "stunned by the arrogance of power displayed by the President" in his dismissal of Mr. Cox.

"In the midst of the moral swamp of Watergate," the New York churchman said, "Mr. Cox has stood as an island of integrity, assuring the American people that a person of commanding stature was guarding the Constitution of the United States."

"Congress must take action to restore the balance of power that protects the very essence of democracy in our nation, re-assuring us of the ultimate moral integrity of our Government," he continued.

Rabbi Eisendrath called for the re-appointment of Mr. Cox "to head a Congressional investigation into all matters relating to Watergate until the truth has been revealed and those criminally responsible brought to justice."

The Jewish leader said that America now faces "one of the most profound constitutional, political and moral crises in our history."

Meanwhile, the Women's Division of the United Methodist Church and the denomination's Board of Church and Society both called on the House of Representatives to begin impeachment proceedings against Mr. Nixon.

Teacher Questions Nixon

WASHINGTON, Oct. 25 (AP) —The head of a national teachers organization has written President Nixon asking him how the nation's 2.2 million teachers can impart ethical values while the President "disregards high standards of morality."

Helen D. Wise, president of the National Education Association, told Mr. Nixon yesterday that the nation's teachers "share the groundswell of public outrage" in the Administration's handling of Watergate.