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Aiken: Impeach Him or

Washington

Senator George D. Aiken of Vermont, the influential dean of congressional Republicans, declared yesterday that the House of Representatives should either impeach President Nixon or "get off his back."

The 81-year-old senator, making his first formal statement on the Watergate scandal, said that the President has a duty to remain in office and that Congress should not evade its responsibility by encouraging Mr. Nixon to resign.

"I am speaking out now

because the developing hue and cry for the President's resignation suggests to me a veritable epidemic of emotionalism," Aiken said.

SPEECH

In a rare Senate speech, Aiken asserted that "to ask the President now to resign — and thus relieve the Congress of its clear congressional duty — amounts to a declaration of incompetence on the part of the Congress."

Aiken said that he had avoided comment on Watergate because he had not wanted to contribute to "the destruction of the third presidency in a row.

"At the same time," he continued, "the White House has handled its domestic troubles with such relentless incompetence that those of us who would like to help have been like swimmers searching for a way out of the water only to run into one smooth and slippery rock after another."

While asserting that "the President's public explanations of the Watergate mess have been astonishingly inept," Aiken said that was not of itself sufficient ground for impeachment.

DEADLINE

He urged the House leaders to set a deadline for de-

termining whether there were grounds for formal impeachment proceedings and then either act on such evidence or tell the public if it did not exist.

His position was supported later on the Senate floor by Henry L. Bellmon (Rep.-Okla.), who vowed that he would "refuse to participate in and resist efforts to cast away the legal and proven processes of the past in the face of demands by a currently inflamed citizenry."

Aiken's admonition had no immediate impact, however, on either the demands that Mr. Nixon step down voluntarily or the efforts of lead-

'Get Off His Back'

ing Republicans to dissociate themselves and the party from the President.

Senators Jacob K. Javits of New York and Richard S. Schweiker of Pennsylvania, both liberal Republicans, issued separate statements declaring that the party must take the lead in insisting on a full disclosure of all evidence of wrongdoing in the Nixon Administration.

The Ripon Society, an organization of liberal and moderate Republicans, announced plans for a national conference to set party goals because the Nixon Administration had become so "debilitated" that it is unable to act as a source of coherent

national policy."

Roger C. Cramton, who served until March as an assistant attorney general, told a House judiciary subcommittee that he would "welcome a resignation of the President that would lead to orderly succession."

RENEGING

Cramton, now dean of the law school at Cornell University, also testified that there are grounds for Congress to enact a joint resolution "censuring the President for his breach of faith" in the Watergate case.

Several Democrats also went on record in favor of the President's resignation.

One of them, George McGovern of South Dakota, noted that yesterday was the anniversary of his landslide defeat by Mr. Nixon in the 1972 presidential election and said:

"I think President Nixon has lost the capacity to govern the country. I think he will come to recognize that."

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