

Nixon Urged to Quit if Impeached

By Richard Lyons and William Greider
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House Minority Leader John Rhodes (R-Ariz.) said yesterday that if the House impeaches President Nixon he should consider resigning rather than be tried by the Senate and possibly removed from office.

"The idea of resigning should be pretty high up in his mind," said Rhodes in response to a question at a breakfast meeting with newsmen. Rhodes added that he had "no feelings" on what action the House may take, though he thought the chances "pretty good" that the Judiciary Committee would recommend impeachment in view of its large number of anti-Nixon liberal Democrats.

Rhodes told newsmen the House impeachment inquiry became "as inevitable as night and day" once Mr. Nixon fired Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox. If the administration's credibility is to be "restored," the impeachment inquiry is "the foundation stone," said Rhodes. He said the President's effort to restore confidence through "Operation Candor" "didn't prove to be sufficient."

told a Capitol Hill news conference that pressure for impeachment and resignation is declining, and promised to lobby against impeachment with members of Congress.

"I'll do my best to help in any way I can, on the grounds that as of today I don't believe there is any ground to justify impeachment," said Ford.

REP. JOHN J. RHODES
... urges avoiding Hill trial



Ford, however, said of Mr. Nixon's financial disclosures: "I don't think it hurts him. I think it helped him. There was a lot of mystery about his donation of papers. Now we find that it was a quite common practice by other politicians."

Ford remarked that when he donated his congressional papers to the University of Michigan, he did not claim a tax deduction. "But they were a lot less valuable than they might be now," he joked.

Rhodes said he wasn't sure Mr. Nixon had helped himself by releasing his financial records. Releasing in come tax returns "opens you up to everyone who wants to nitpick you to death," said Rhodes, citing criticism that the President didn't give enough to charity last year.

Rhodes conceded that as of today it looks as though Watergate will have "considerable impact" on the 1974 congressional elections. But "things could turn around" by then and not cause big Republican losses, he added. As he did two weeks ago when he succeeded Ford as House Republican leader, Rhodes kept distance between himself and the White House. He said his constituency is the Republican members of the House.

Rhodes refused to take up the cry of some Republicans that House Democrats are trying to drag out the impeachment inquiry into the 1974 campaign period.

Both Rhodes and Ford noted with approval that House Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter Rodino (D-N.J.) mentioned the possibility of completing the committee inquiry by the first of April. "I don't think there is any stalling," said Rhodes, adding that if the committee recommends impeachment, the House could vote on it within two weeks.

Rhodes also said he believes the Constitution requires that to be impeached a President must be found guilty of an "indictable offense," a crime spelled out by law. Most members of the Judiciary Committee appear to feel that he need not be proven guilty of crime, but of something less, such as actions that bring disgrace upon the office.