

NYTimes

Letters to the Editor

'If the President Withdrew . . .'

To the Editor:

Senator Buckley in his much publicized statement said: "If the President withdrew, this crisis would be resolved." It would not. On the contrary, the real crisis would only begin. The President's resignation would deal a devastating blow to the legitimacy of our form of government, and not only to the office of the President, but also to the very genesis of our country—its Constitution.

It would deal a deadly blow to the foundation of our system of justice—the presumption of innocence before proven guilty. The President's resignation would be widely interpreted as acknowledgment of guilt. The Senator went so far as to imply the President's guilt by association only because some of the people in the White House might have committed a crime.

The Senator's statement that his call for the President's resignation does not imply any belief on his part in the President's guilt or innocence is puzzling. If the President is innocent of any crime, why should he resign? If the President were to resign, he would set a frightening precedent.

Any future President could be removed from office only because some fantastic charges gained wide publicity. The next logical step would be to remove the legally elected head of

state by public opinion poll, or by partisan cabal, which chooses to ignore the only constitutional procedure, that of impeachment by the House and conviction by the Senate.

It is not the agony of the perfectly legal impeachment proceedings which would tear the country apart, as the Senator suggests, but the agony and the pervasive sense of guilt stemming from the destruction of an innocent man which would result in endless recriminations, strife, bitterness, and quite possibly in a civil war. Removal of a head of state by illegal means or pressure had precisely such results, as history shows so clearly.

President Nixon will stand tall in history for his courage and statesmanship in his foreign policy initiatives, for his courageous, if unpopular at that time, decisions on Vietnam and Cambodia, in September 1970 during the Jordanian crisis, in last October's Mideast war, and not the least in importance, for his remarkable endurance to stay in office and to uphold our Constitution despite pressure from his opponents and his friends.

The President will not resign because by following the Senator's advice he would place the future of this country and indeed of the world in jeopardy.

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Chappaqua, N.Y., Mar. 29, 1974