

Defections Spread Within

Pressure for Nixon's Removal

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Ominous signs of spreading defection within his own Republican Party arose on Capitol Hill yesterday as pressure for President Nixon's resignation or impeachment mounted relentlessly.

Two top House Republican figures, Minority Leader John Rhodes of Arizona and Republican Conference Chairman John Anderson of Illinois, publicly suggested that Mr. Nixon consider resigning.

Rhodes, citing editorial demands for resignation or impeachment in newspapers once strongly partisan toward the President, said Mr. Nixon should be considering leaving the White House "when you have responsible people and institutions reading the transcripts and changing their views."

The editorial calls for the

President's removal from office came from such staunch former Nixon supporters as the Chicago Tribune, the Omaha World-Herald and William Randolph Hearst Jr., editor-in-chief of the Hearst newspapers.

In Friday's editions, both the Los Angeles Times and the Cleveland Plain Dealer call editorially for the President's impeachment.

Anderson, claiming that the President had "damaged himself irreparably" by releasing the Watergate transcripts, said he would welcome the President's resignation. He asserted that a "consensus" for resignation is emerging in the Republican Party—both within the House and at large.

"The transcripts make it quite clear he was deeply involved in Watergate on

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Republican Party



Rhodes: "If Nixon comes to conclude that he can no longer be effective as President, he will do something about it . . . if he should resign, I would accept it."



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the 13th of March," he said. "Given the sentiment I have detected on the floor of the House, if I had to predict, I would predict he would be impeached."

Rhodes was only slightly forthright. "The President's resignation, he said, "would probably be beneficial" to the Republicans, but he added that he was not recommending that course now.

The Republican from Arizona estimated that the House was slightly tilted against impeachment at the moment by a 51-to-49 per cent ratio. But he said the release of the Watergate transcripts increased the chances of impeachment.

House Democratic Leader Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. is reported, on the other hand, to have concluded that there is a 50- to 100-vote margin for impeachment.

Anderson contended that the edited transcripts show the President to be "totally lacking in moral sensibility" and that on the basis of the

March 21 transcript "there is a prima facie case for obstruction of justice."

In the White House, meanwhile, the President's new counselor, Dean Burch, said the adverse reactions on Capitol Hill are not viewed as having reached "flood-tide proportions."

Burch, in dissenting to yesterday's new criticism and an earlier salvo from Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott (R-Pa.), said, "No one has talked about the question of whether he [the President] has committed an impeachable offense." The emphasis, he said, has been on the moral tone of the Oval Office conversations as revealed in the edited transcripts.

"I respectfully suggest that the issue here is impeachment," Burch insisted. "The President is not running for president of the senior class."

Scott had decried the revelations of the edited transcripts as a "shabby, disgusting, immoral performance."

Burch said, "I would hate

like hell to think that consideration of impeachment would be on these grounds rather than whether or not an impeachable offense has been committed."

Nonetheless, Vice President Gerald R. Ford, in his sharpest statement yet on the Watergate transcripts, spoke of a grave governmental "crisis of confidence" caused by "a continuous series of revelations and reports of corruption, malfeasance and wrongdoing in the federal government, not the least of which is the sorry mess which carries the label of Watergate."

AFL-CIO President George Meany told newsmen after an executive council meeting that he "got sick to my stomach" reading the Watergate transcripts and announced, "This man is no longer fit to be President of the United States. The best thing he could do for the office is to resign."

Little enthusiasm for the President could be detected at a meeting yesterday in Hot Springs, Va. of the Busi-

ness Council, one of Mr. Nixon's most influential constituencies.

But no member of the council, made up of chaimen and presidents of the nation's 125 largest corporations, expressed a desire that President Nixon resign.

G. William Miller, president of Tectron, told Washington Post staff writer Peter Milius that in the aftermath of the Watergate transcripts "it looks very bad for him at present." But Miller said he does not feel that the President should resign, but should be removed only through constitutional procedures.

The Archbishop of Los Angeles, Timothy Cardinal Manning, said of the Watergate scandal, "I'm worried about the country. Very worried. . . . The great tragedy of it is the raising of the 'great lie,' that it's all right to do it, but 'don't get caught.' He spoke during a meeting of Western state Roman Catholic bishops in Los Angeles.

These public expressions

were reflected in new polling data announced yesterday by political consultant William R. Hamilton.

Hamilton, who works primarily for Democrats, said a national survey he has just completed shows that 73 per cent of the electorate would support a congressman who voted for impeachment while 29 per cent would vote less favorably upon such a vote.

"It is the suburban white-collar middle-class voter that has become most disenchanted with the Watergate affair and President Nixon's association with it," Hamilton said on the basis of his survey.

Other polls to be released this weekend confirm that finding.

Of the entire range of reaction yesterday, the most significant was the growing erosion of support in the conservative Republican power centers of Capitol Hill.

Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-

Ariz.), the pre-eminent Republican conservative in Congress, was out of town yesterday. But he met privately with Dean Burch in the White House on Wednesday. Asked about the Arizonan's reactions to the latest tide of political sentiment, Burch said, "It is always better to let Goldwater speak for himself."

Burch was Goldwater's national chairman during his 1964 presidential campaign.

Current estimates of the President's potential support in the Senate for an impeachment acquittal show a base of 45 or so probable supporters today. The Boston Globe published a survey showing a narrower margin of 15 "secure" votes for the President and 23 others now leaning toward acquittal. A two-thirds vote is necessary for conviction. This would mean the President needs 34 votes for acquittal in the Senate.

One possible bellweather of conservative sentiment was syndicated news columnist

James J. Kilpatrick, a staunch Nixon backer, who said yesterday that he feels "embarrassment, shame and disgust" after a full reading of the Watergate transcript.

Kilpatrick said he is still debating whether to call for Mr. Nixon's resignation.

In the House, Rep. Barber B. Conable (R-N.Y.), chairman of the policy committee, was mildly critical of the statements by Rhodes and Anderson.

"If our leaders are to speak for us," he said, "I think we ought to be sure they do speak for us, not themselves. We shouldn't go over the side of the ship one by one, or we might drown individually."

From the embattled White House, presidential director of communications Ken W. Clawson said the President was fully aware of the adverse developments yesterday on Capitol Hill. He described the Chicago Tribune call for resignation as a "blow."

But, Clawson added, "The President will not quit even if hell freezes over—no matter what."