

GOP Efforts Build to Get Nixon to Quit

By Lou Cannon

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The first stirrings of what is likely to become a concerted Republican effort to remove President Nixon from office before impeachment runs its course have emerged in reaction to the Watergate transcripts.

"There's an awful lot of pulling and hauling going on," says House Minority Leader John Rhodes of Arizona,

who disclaims any role in a plot to convince Mr. Nixon he must resign.

"The most propitious time to convince him to resign would be now," said House GOP Conference Leader John Anderson of Illinois. "Once the impeachment resolution is voted on, the lines may have hardened again and the President may have been persuaded that he can last a little longer."

What is fueling the Republican defections, in addition to the revulsion to the Watergate transcripts, is a feeling that ultimately the President cannot survive. If this is true, Republicans are saying privately, the President should make it easy on both the country and his party by quitting now.

"He should spare the nation one last agony," Anderson said. "He has himself so often used the argument about the importance of the preservation of the presidency, that we are entitled to use it now against him. If he is capable of a last act of nobility, he should resign."

Anderson holds the view shared by many other Republicans that Sen. Barry Goldwater of Arizona is "the key, the catalyst" to convincing President Nixon to resign voluntarily.

"Sen. Goldwater has a special relationship because he has been a presidential nominee," says Anderson. "And other Republicans are suspected of merely self-interest if they now urge Mr. Nixon to quit, while Goldwater is above that sort of suspicions."

Anderson said he feels sure that "someone may be talking to Goldwater about the possibility of talking to the President," but he said he had no specific information. Rhodes said he has discussed the issue with Goldwater in the past but

not recently and that he has "no idea of what he would do."

Goldwater told The Washington Post yesterday that he does not favor the idea of calling on the President and urging him to resign at this time. He said he had not been

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in touch with party leaders during the past few days although "I talk with John Rhodes all the time." Goldwater said he continues to feel that no reason for resignation has been shown but that Mr. Nixon would surely resign if the House voted to impeach him.

Among Republicans there seems to be a shared feeling that neither Goldwater nor such other Republican Senate leaders as Minority Whip Robert Griffin would want to take the lead in asking the President to quit before the evidence that would impeach him has even been presented to the House Judiciary Committee.

One influential Republican said that any congressman who went to Mr. Nixon and asked him to quit could be "hung out to dry in his own party" if the President turned him down and then leaked the story.

And the unmistakable signals from the White House yesterday were that the President has no intention of stepping down at this time, which would at least seem to mean until there is a better vote count in the Senate than anyone has now.

"He's not going to be pressured out of office," said White House chief of staff Alexander M. Haig Jr. "If anything, there is a greater conviction here that the system must work its way. To do any-

thing else would do serious damage."

Haig insisted that the White House was not surprised by the depth and extent of the anti-Nixon sentiment in the wake of the Watergate transcripts.

"It has been embarrassing and shocking to a lot of people as the President knew it would be," Haig said. But the White House chief of staff said that for the President to yield to the reaction by resignation would change the American system of government to a parliamentary one and undermine the confidence of foreign nations.

"We just can't succumb to the firestorms of public opinion," Haig said.

Nevertheless, despite the White House stiffening of resistance to resignation demands, there are indications that the first stages of a quietly concerted move to convince Mr. Nixon he must leave office are developing on Capitol Hill.

One version suggested by a knowledgeable Republican would be for Rhodes, Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, Goldwater and House Minority Whip Leslie Arends of Illinois to call on the President.

But in the version presented by this Republican this action would occur right after "the bells of the impeachment vote ring in the House" and not before.

Haig pointed out that neither Scott nor Rhodes had actually called for the President's resignation. This is accurate as far as it goes, but both Republican leaders made many of the same points that were cited by such newspapers as the Chicago Tribune and the Los Angeles Times in calling for the President to quit.

Scott said that the transcripts reveal "a deplorable, shabby, disgusting and immoral performance . . . by each of those" who took part in the discussions.