

Papers Cite Transcripts in Ending Support of Nixon

By MARTIN ARNOLD

Several of the major newspapers that editorially supported President Nixon for years said last week that their decision to defect was reached with little difficulty once the transcript of the White House tapes was made public.

"It just flowed out of the transcripts," was the way Robert Jensen, chief of the letters to the editor column for The Los Angeles Times, described the decision. The Los Angeles Times, which supported President Nixon in each of his campaigns for the Presidency, called for his impeachment in an editorial on May 10.

The paper said that it believed the President had committed the crime of obstruction of justice.

The tone of the editorial was more sorrowful than angry, but, Mr. Jensen said, the conclusion was inevitable once the transcripts were public. Otis Chandler, the paper's publisher, had been disturbed "by the whole Watergate episode" and approved the editorial, Mr. Jensen said.

Readers Show Agreement

Among the first batch of letters from readers, 252 letters agreed with the paper's stand, 48 opposed and 16 commented on the transcripts but did not take a stand on impeachment. The Los Angeles Times now considers itself independent politically, although for many years it was Republican.

The Omaha (Neb.) World-Herald called upon the President to resign, although the paper had always supported Mr. Nixon and its circulation is mainly in what, considered the area's voting record, might be called "Nixon country."

Still, a spokesman for the paper said, the transcript showed clearly, in the paper's opinion, that the President was "not morally fit to be President." Unlike The Los Angeles Times, however, the Omaha paper did not find grounds for impeachment. Most of the readership, judging by letters received, opposed the editorial.

The Omaha paper, although Republican, has looked somewhat askance at Watergate since the scandals first became public and was upset with the President when he dismissed Archibald Cox as special Watergate prosecutor. It supported President Nixon's Vietnam policies.

The Kansas City Times, a morning paper, called for Presidential resignation or impeachment. Its sister paper, The Kansas Star, the afternoon paper, had no editorial on the subject—because most of the readers take both papers and the editorials in one are never repeated in the other.

William Baker, editor-in-chief for the papers, said that The Times's decision "was painful"

but so too were the "events leading up to it." He said that "as we followed the tapes it became quite obvious that we had to come out this way."

Like most of the other papers calling for the President's resignation or impeachment, the editorial position was taken almost matter-of-factly. "Events followed one after another, and finally we realized we just had to do it," Mr. Baker said. The paper considers itself independent politically, although it supported President Nixon for election in 1968 and for reelection in 1972.

Letters from readers in response to the editorial opposed the newspaper's stand by about 2 to 1, Mr. Baker said, and there have been some threats of advertising cancellation.

The floodgate for pro-Nixon newspapers calling for the President's resignation or impeachment was probably touched off when William Randolph Hearst Jr., editor of the Hearst news-

papers, formerly an ardent supporter of the President, wrote that the tapes revealed in Mr. Nixon "a moral blind spot" that made his impeachment inevitable.

Perhaps the most influential of all the anti-Nixon editorials was the one appearing on May 9 in The Chicago Tribune, one of the staunchest Republican newspapers in the country.

Its three-part editorial called for the President to resign or to be impeached. According to Clayton Kirkpatrick, editor of the paper, "there was no agonizing over it."

Mr. Kirkpatrick said that "the [editorial] board was unanimous" after having read the full transcript, and that the decision had readily been supported by Stanton Cook, chairman and publisher of The Tribune.

The editorial produced the greatest deluge of incoming telephone calls and mail in half a century, with a little more

than half in favor of the editorial stand, the paper said.

On Tuesday, perhaps even more startling, The Greensburg (Pa.) Tribune-Review urged the House of Representatives to impeach Mr. Nixon and urged him to step aside pending a Senate trial.

What made this editorial so unusual was that the paper's publisher, Richard Mellon Scaife, had contributed \$1-million to President Nixon's campaign two years ago, making Mr. Scaife the second largest contributor.

The editorial said, "We are sickened with Mr. Nixon's twisted sense of loyalty to those shadowy figures who have been close to him; this at the expense of a much higher form of loyalty we feel he owes the good people of this country."

Mr. Scaife, who calls himself a "Goldwater Republican," said, "My country comes first; my party comes second."