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# Order at Camp David

By Lou Cannon  
and David S. Broder  
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Washington

President Nixon seriously considered the option of resigning and temporarily rejected it, informed White House sources said yesterday.

They said that Mr. Nixon, aware that his hopes of averting impeachment would be seriously damaged by his latest transcribed disclosures, brought up the possibility of resignation Sunday at a Camp David meeting with his top aides. The President also discussed the possibility of letting Vice President Gerald Ford take over temporarily under provisions of the 25th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, these sources said.

During the discussion, according to one source, presidential assistant Patrick J. Buchanan and White House defense lawyer James D. St. Clair pictured Mr. Nixon's situation as virtually unsalvageable. They seemed to be counseling the President that his only alternative to impeachment and conviction



JAMES D. ST. CLAIR  
Legal difficulties

is resignation from office. Alexander M. Haig, the White House chief of staff, also painted a grim picture to White House staff members. He informed them ahead of time yesterday afternoon that the President intended to make available to the House Judiciary Committee "material that will be damaging to us."

In talking to the staff, Haig spoke of "rough weeks ahead" in reaction to the President's release of hitherto withheld transcripts of



PATRICK BUCHANAN  
Political assessment

conversations between Mr. Nixon and his onetime chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman.

One staff member left the meeting saying that "it's now only a matter of time for the President." Another said: "It's a brand new ball game and we're in the fourth quarter with the score 21-0 against us."

One source said Mr. Nixon seriously had weighed the possibility of an immediate resignation. Another source said the President had in-



ALEXANDER HAIG  
Rough weeks ahead

structed one of his speechwriters to prepare "material that could be used in a resignation speech" while emphasizing that Mr. Nixon had made no decision to step down.

Still another source said that the President had given his greatest consideration to invoking the 25th Amendment, intended to allow for presidential succession in cases of disability.

At the Camp David meeting, Mr. Nixon appeared to



RAY PRICE  
Nixon's speech writer

be the only person who thought the 25th Amendment option worthy of serious consideration, said one source. St. Clair, Haig, Buchanan and presidential speechwriter Ray Price all opposed the idea.

"For the present time, at least, that option has been foreclosed," the source said.

Price was described by this same source as agreeing that Mr. Nixon's position was nearly hopeless but suggesting that he again take

his case to the people. Haig described the President's alternatives as "depressing" and reportedly took no strong position on any of the options discussed.

The 25th Amendment option was raised by Mr. Nixon after St. Clair and Buchanan brought up the option of outright resignation. Mr. Nixon told his aides he is not prepared to resign at this time and questioned Buchanan and St. Clair about the accuracy of their grim impeachment assessment.

"He wasn't quite prepared to accept how bad it really is," the source said, and added: "He wouldn't believe all of this. . . . He wishes he heard something else."

St. Clair concentrated on the legal difficulties posed by the President's prospective release of the Haldeman tapes. Buchanan delivered a gloomy political assessment, advising the President that Senate conviction is becoming more likely every day.

"I wish you hadn't said that," the President reportedly replied in a tone that the source described as one of sadness, not of anger.