

WXPPost Resignation Urged By GOP Senators

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By Spencer Rich
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon's Senate support appeared to be collapsing yesterday, with new calls for his resignation and a widening belief that a two-thirds vote is already on hand to oust him from office once the House files impeachment charges.

Sen. John Tower (R-Tex.) told reporters that the Senate Republican Policy Committee, at a meeting open to all 42 GOP senators, had debated possible courses of action and "the majority sentiment among Republican senators is that he should retire from office."

At the same time, Tower said, the senators expressed fear that "the President does not perhaps comprehend the great hazard he faces if it comes to trial."

Although the policy committee didn't take any formal action, in part because GOP Leader Hugh Scott (R-Pa.) was away at a funeral, it decided tentatively to send a delegation to the President to advise him of the strong sentiment among Republicans for retirement and to warn him that he will very likely be convicted in the Senate if he doesn't resign first.

Tower said two proposals for such a delegation appeared to have the most support: to have the entire 42-man GOP delegation see Mr. Nixon, with each member telling the President his views; or to send the GOP leadership team. Tower said a decision on how to proceed may be reached in a few days.

See SENATE, A31, Col. 1

SENATE, From A1

"It's pretty obvious that there is growing sentiment for resignation. . . We hope the President understands the sense of the Republican caucus," said, Tower, a the past.

Later in the day, Scott met in his office with Tower and the other Senate Republican leaders, with Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) and Jacob K. Javits (R-N.Y.) also present, to discuss the best means to approach the Pres-

ident and convey the sentiments of the Senate Republicans. No final agreement was reached and the same group will meet again today.

Scott said he agreed there are "hazards" for Mr. Nixon if he lets the issue go to trial. He added that the prospect of a six-month trial, which White House spokesmen have hinted at, is "very distressing," and said he will ask the Rules Committee to write in rules to see that a trial can't last that long.

Meanwhile, individual senators yesterday were saying openly that the events of the past few days—particularly the President's release of transcripts of his conversations on June 23, 1972—have pushed the anti-Nixon count in the Senate past the two-thirds mark. This indicates a tentative vote sufficient for conviction on the charges expected to be sent over by the House.

"It's very likely this could have put him over the edge in the Senate," said Sen. Walter Huddleston (D-Ky.). "He wasn't in a position to withstand this further bombshell."

Sen. Peter Dominick (R-Colo.), when asked if he believes the votes are there in the Senate to convict Mr. Nixon, said, "I think they are." He added that Mr. Nixon's announced decision against resigning is "not a wise decision. From the party point of view, we'd be better off if he did; from his point of view, he'd be better off."

Although only last week the consensus of the Senate's best vote-counters was that the Senate was still a handful short of the required 67 for conviction, one of them said yesterday he believes the total has pushed past that number, at least for the moment.

Another Republican figure, known for his total loyalty to the President, said privately, "We haven't got the 34 votes now to ward off conviction."

But he pointed out that presidential attorney James D. St. Clair had told Senate GOP leaders Monday afternoon that he wants six

months of trial in the Senate for his defense of the President. "Maybe in six months, we will have the needed 34 votes. This latest tape release will become just another incident and the flare of sentiment will go back and we'll have 34. It's a long shot, but it's possible," he said.

Tower, in his remarks to reporters, confirmed that St. Clair had estimated a Senate trial would last six months.

That appeared to scotch hopes for a speedy disposition of the case. There was some talk of reducing the length of the House debate, scheduled for about 10 to 12 days starting Aug. 19, and Senate Majority Leader

Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) said yesterday he would be happy if the Senate trial could start early and finish before Election Day. But Tower said that in view of St. Clair's remarks, he felt it "highly unlikely" that the trial could finish before the November elections.

Senate Majority Whip Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) said, however, that he foresees a speedier trial. Now that the President has promised to turn over more tapes, the evidence will be available, he told reporters at a breakfast meeting, and presidential lawyer James St. Clair no longer has any reason to ask for a delay in its start.

Once the issue is joined in the Senate, he added, the trial "could be completed in a month. It certainly would not take more than three months and even two months would strain my credulity."

In confirmation of judgments by senators yesterday that the President's position is badly eroding, it was learned that last week Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman James O. Eastland (D-Miss.) had advised presidential staff chief Alexander M. Haig Jr. that it looked as if the President would be convicted in a Senate trial.

Yesterday, a number of Senate Republicans publicly expressed shock or outrage at the President's actions and said resignation would be welcome—but stopped short of demanding it outright.

George D. Aiken (R-Vt.) said resignation "would bring a sigh of relief here

on the Hill." Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) confirmed that he felt he had been deceived, and said, "I don't know whether it's wise or not, but surely everyone would be relieved if he resigned."

Jacob K. Javits (R-N.Y.) said, "The country would be better off if he were not in the office now." But he stopped short of calling for resignation, as Sen. Robert P. Griffin (R-Mich.) had on Monday.

Democratic Sens. Philip A. Hart (D-Mich.), Huddleston, John V. Tunney (D-Calif.), Abraham A. Ribicoff (D-Conn.) and Joseph M. Montoya (D-N.M.) were among those flatly calling for resignation yesterday.

One topic being discussed increasingly was whether the President could be given absolution from any criminal prosecution if he agreed to resign. Griffin and Tower said they favor this course. But it wasn't clear what legal formula could be used to achieve this.

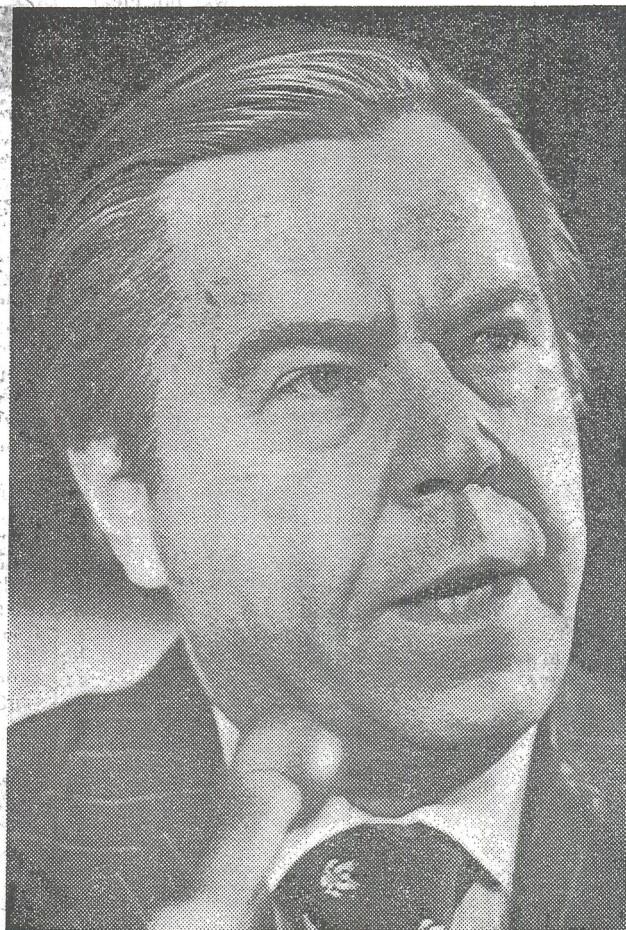
About the only Senator who came out strongly in defense of Mr. Nixon yesterday was Carl Curtis (R-Neb.), who told a TV audience that Congress shouldn't panic. He said the United States would be like a "banana republic" if it ousted Mr. Nixon in favor of Vice President Gerald R. Ford, who in turn then named someone to fill the vice presidential slot.

Curtis said this would mean both Ford and the new Vice President would be men who hadn't been elected to their high office, but merely nominated by a President under procedures for filling the vice presidency when it is vacant.



Associated Press

Rep. Margaret M. Heckler (R-Mass.) tells reporters that she will vote for impeachment if President Nixon stays in office. She called the transcripts released Monday by the President "shocking beyond belief."



By Larry Morris—The Washington Post

Rep. John J. Rhodes . . . "I will vote aye."