

Waiting for the Word

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Members of Congress gathered around television sets and news service wire machines yesterday exchanging rumors and waiting for the President to re-

sign.

The capital was awash with all sorts of reports, one supplanting another every few minutes all afternoon and into the evening.

"We've got more rumors than we've got fleas," complained one Southern Demo-

crat.

The heavy resignation talk began after the wire services reported that the Providence Journal Bulletin was predicting the President's resignation. Immediately, the guessing among congressmen was that presidential defender Rabbi Baruch

Korff, who is from Rhode Island, must have been the source of that story.

Toward midafternoon, a story started in the Republican cloak room of the House that Mr. Nixon would announce his resignation precisely at 3:30 p.m. But White House deputy press secre-

on Capitol Hill

tary Gerald Warren shot that one down with a statement at about 3:45 p.m. that the President did not intend to resign.

About the same time, Rose Mary Woods, the President's personal secretary, was quoted as saying flatly that the President would not re-

sign.

Next, someone on the Republican side of the House heard — erroneously — that the President had asked for network time at 4 p.m.

House Democratic whip John McFall (Dem-Manteca) encountered a re-

porter in the speaker's lobby and asked if the 4 p.m. rumor was true. Told that it probably wasn't, McFall said, "some of my friends on the Republican side must have been trying to pull my leg."

About 4:15 p.m., Representative John Roussetot, emerged from the Republican cloakroom with news that turned out to be mostly accurate — but the conservative Republican from San Marino, said he was inclined not to believe it.

This report was that White House aide William Timmons had just telephoned Representative LaMar Baker (Rep-Tenn.) to say that the President planned to meet with Senator Barry Goldwater (Rep-Ariz.) later in the afternoon. Timmons also was reported to have told Baker that Mr. Nixon would definitely not resign before the day was out.

Roussetot was dubious. "They probably wouldn't tell Timmons," Roussetot said flatly. Others agreed with him.

So when the White House announcement came of Mr. Nixon's meeting with Goldwater, along with Senate minority leader Hugh Scott and House minority leader John Rhodes, most members were taken by surprise.

The second-ranking Republican in the House, Representative Leslie Arends (Rep-Ill.), read it first on the wire service machine. "It is strange," he muttered, when a reporter asked why he had not also been invited to the White House.

Goldwater's televised statement that the President had not made up his mind whether to resign led many Republican congressmen to conclude that Mr. Nixon had in fact decided to resign after all.

"There are certain things

he has to do first, and this — meeting with congressional leaders — was one of them," said Representative Charles Wiggins (Rep-El Monte). "I believe his departure is inevitable."

As newspapermen clustered around the congressmen, most of the questions were not about Mr. Nixon's resignation, but about what would come after it.

Who would be Gerald Ford's vice president? How long would the House Judiciary Committee take to investigate the new nominee's background? What about a bill to confer immunity from criminal prosecution on Mr. Nixon following his departure from office?