Editorial

The Tech endorses the following editorial statement being run in 22 college newspapers nationwide:

Constitutional government in the United States may have been suspended at 8:00pm last Saturday night. Richard Nixon now rules by fiat and force. He is no longer a legitimate leader.

With his standing and for that of office and the intents of Congress and the Judiciary, the President first refused to abide by a court order to produce Watergate documents. His later turnabout defied the immediate contention, but cannot obscure his repeated abuse of power. He then forced the resignation of the Attorney General and fired his Deputy and the Watergate Special Prosecutor when they refused to condone his conduct. Moreover, the President abolished the office of Special Prosecutor and dispatched the FBI to seal off its records. These decisive and unprecedented actions represent the tactics of a military coup. They are anathema to a rational democratic polity.

Even before these steps were taken, public confidence in the Nixon Administration's ability to govern was at one of its all-time lows. Now this support will deteriorate still further. The mandate of 1972 has been buried in a legacy of illegality, hypocrisy and deceit.

When elected officials violate the sacred trust placed in them by the people, the Constitution provides means for them to be impeached and, if convicted, removed from office. These procedures are very difficult to implement and are seldom used. But if ours were a parliamentary system of government, the situation was Allen's months ago.

In the past, Mr. Nixon cloaks his actions in a veil of legality, but his record as President bore his intentions to foreclose rule by law. The President's actions have been unimpeachable, but no amount of legal double-talk or political intimidation can obscure this fact. The question of his past culpability is almost moot. He is willing to maintain the Watergate cover-up at any cost.

The methods of response are numerous. Now more than ever, we must write our Congressmen. The balance of mail over the next few days will be crucial. Massive public expression of dissent – no matter what form it takes – is equally important.

The weeks ahead could represent either the redemption of American democracy or the prologue to its collapse. We remain silent at our own peril.

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The events of the past week have certainly been a shock to a nation already stunned by allegations of widespread corruption and the forced resignation of a vice president who engaged in criminal behavior even while in office.

President Nixon's actions in first refusing to turn the Watergate tapes and documents over to Judge John Sirica and then bowing to public pressure in handing them over to the Government are laudable. Nonetheless, his actions at these critical junctures demonstrate his willingness to maintain the Watergate cover-up at all costs. This puts into question his ability to govern. He then forced the resignation of the Attorney General and fired his Deputy and the Watergate Special Prosecutor when they refused to condone his conduct. Moreover, the President abolished the office of Special Prosecutor and dispatched the FBI to seal off its records. These decisive and unprecedented actions represent the tactics of a military coup. They are anathema to a rational democratic polity.

The decision to turn over the tapes was not made on the basis of legal advice. Instead, it was made on the basis of political expediency. The President's actions have been unimpeachable, but no amount of legal double-talk or political intimidation can obscure this fact. The question of his past culpability is almost moot. He is willing to maintain the Watergate cover-up at any cost.

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