

Mail on Tape Efforts

Of Hill Panel Is Light

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By Mary Russell

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"The tapes, all the tapes and nothing but the tapes," said one telegram sent to House Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter Rodino (D-N.J.) last week.

House members, such as Rodino, the leadership and other members of the Judiciary Committee, who have received a considerable amount of mail on the President's decision to release transcripts, but not the actual tapes of White House Watergate conversations, find their mail running heavily against the President.

The offices of many members, however, report that their mail following the president's television speech last Monday night and the subsequent release of the transcripts, has been only slightly heavier than usual—an increase of perhaps two to 10 letters a day.

"This just hasn't had the impact that say, the Saturday night massacre had, in terms of mail," said an aide to House majority whip John McFall (D-Calif.). "Maybe it's taking a while for the matter to sink in and the public to react, or maybe people have just become shock-proof."

By far the largest amount of mail has been sent to Rodino, the chairman of the committee charged with

handling the impeachment inquiry. Rodino received 15,798 letters and telegrams as of Saturday. Of those 14,555 have written to urge the committee not to settle for the edited transcripts but to continue to seek the actual tapes, while only 1,243 support the President's position that the transcripts are sufficient.

A Coral Gables, Fla., resident wrote, "The release of the transcripts is an obvious ploy to mislead. Move ahead with impeachment proceedings, you are doing a good job."

Another telegram said, "Get the tapes, not the selected edited transcripts. The committee must hear inflections."

A writer who supported the President's position said, "The President is innocent. Stop harassing him in order to get publicity."

Some Republicans on the Judiciary Committee, like ranking Republican Edward Hutchinson (Mich.) and Reps. David Dennis (Ind.) and Charles Wiggins (Calif.) report a slight increase in mail, but say they either haven't tabulated it or it's running about 50-50.

But Illinois' Republican Rep. Robert McCleary, a Judiciary Committee member who has generally supported the President's position that the transcripts are suffi-

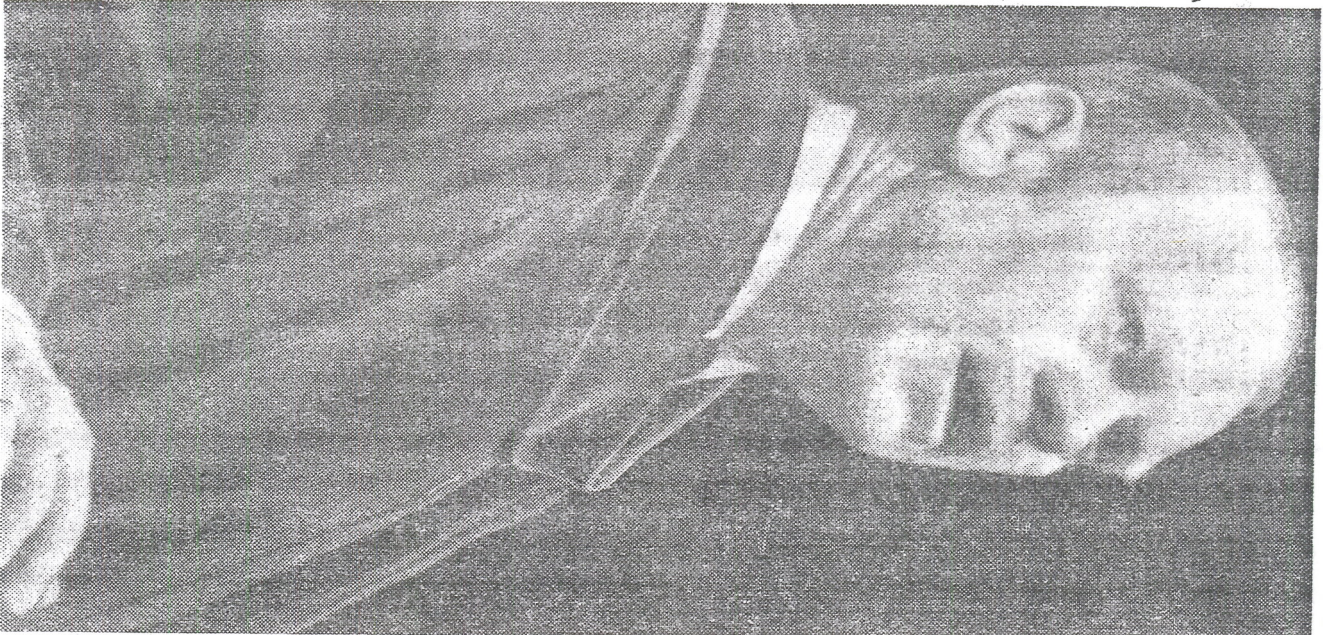
cient, reports receiving 513 letters from his district, the state and around the country opposing the President and 89 supporting him.

Rep. William Cohen (R-Me.), who voted with the Democratic members of the Judiciary Committee to tell the President the transcripts did not comply with the subpoena, reports receiving about 300 letters, running about six to one against the President.

Democrats on the committee, such as Rep. Robert Kas-tenmeier (Wis.) and Don Edwards (Calif.) show their mail running about eight or 10 to one against the President, while Southern Democrats, Walter Flowers (Ala.) and James R. Mann (S.C.) say their volume of mail has increased only slightly and is split between pro-Nixon and anti-Nixon forces.

House Majority Leader Rep. Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill (D-Mass.) has received 75 letters opposing the President's position on the transcripts and two supporting him, a reaction that's no surprise for a congressman representing President John Kennedy's old district in the one state that voted against the President in the last election.

But House Minority Leader John Rhodes (R-Ariz.) who stood by the President's side as he spoke to a cheering crowd of Republicans in Phoenix last Friday, reports mail



Ford: "Be sure you're right, and then go ahead."

Associated Press

running almost as heavily the tapes, not just the transcripts to the Judiciary Committee, and only 11 supporting the President to turn over the President's action.