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Impeachment Alternative

To the Editor:

Our present national crisis, in which we have only the awkward and complex mechanism of impeachment to deal with the problem of a national Administration that has lost the confidence of the public, emphasizes the need for speedy adoption of an effective and acceptable alternative.

Such an alternative is available through enactment of recall — described by President Theodore Roosevelt as “the principle that an officer chosen by the people who is unfaithful may be recalled by vote of the majority before he finishes his term”— on a national basis. Roosevelt said of that proposal, “I have heard no argument advanced against the proposition, save that it will make the public officer timid and always currying favor with the mob. That argument means that you can fool all the people all the time, and is an avowal of disbelief in democracy.”

This is not something which is untried in the United States. Starting with its adoption in 1903 by Los Angeles, it has been enacted on a statewide basis in California, Arizona, Idaho, Washington, Colorado, Nevada, Michigan, Louisiana, North Dakota, Kansas and Wisconsin. In 1921 it resulted in the removal of the Governor of North Dakota.

Nor is recall contrary to the traditions of the party to which Mr. Nixon belongs and of whose philosophy he has been an avowed believer for thirty years. Its original sponsors included such Republican statesmen as Charles Evans Hughes, Henry L. Stimson, Elihu Root and Robert La Follette.

If Congress and the necessary number of state legislatures cannot make recall available in time to deal with our present emergency, it should nevertheless be enacted so that if, unhappily, we are again confronted with a situation such as this, we have an expeditious and effective remedy to deal with it.

RICHARD H. WELS  
New York, Feb. 3, 1974