

# Watergate's second wind

By David Murray  
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## New revelations shock people into reawakening

WASHINGTON — It is the conventional wisdom along the banks of the Potomac that the Congress (including even the House Judiciary Committee), the news media and the public at large are bored to tears with Watergate and impeachment and that President Nixon may well escape from the charges against him because of it.

Nevertheless, the revelations Wednesday that Nixon had ordered the coverup to continue after being informed that it was in progress jolted a large segment of this jaded city.

There is also a feeling that it jolted a jaded electorate, although the feedback isn't yet in.

A Republican centrist in the Senate reported that a group of his colleagues expressed anger and disgust when they watched the "coverup" news on television.

On the House side, a Democratic member of the leadership, who is not noted for his left-wing views, reported a wave of revulsion among congressmen of his party — particularly Southerners who have traditionally supported Nixon.

"I would bet that that one statement alone will result in a vote to impeach of about 300 to 135," the Democrat said.

A Senior staff member close to the Republican leadership in the House said that it was more difficult to gauge GOP reaction, but he added that "these guys are schizoid. One minute they want to blow the President out of the water and the next they're saying George McGovern planned the whole thing."

But most of those in a position to know said that if House members were looking for a hook on which to hang a vote for impeachment, they could do no better than the newly released portion of a conversation on March 22, 1973.

In that conversation, the day after Nixon has publicly stated he first learned of a coverup and ordered a stop to it, the President told his top aides:

"I don't give a s— what happens. I want you all to stonewall it, let them plead the Fifth Amendment, cov-

erup or anything else if it'll save, save the plan. That's the whole point."

That quote hit the country Wednesday.

This week, the Judiciary Committee will continue to issue volumes of evidence on the other parts of its inquiry — the milk fund, ITT, the "Saturday night massacre," the President's tax difficulties.

Indeed, there was supposed to have been a further release from the judiciary committee today, but it was deferred until next week, reportedly as the result of an agreement between Judiciary Committee chairman Peter Rodino and Sen. Sam Ervin, chairman of the Senate Watergate Committee.

A spokesman said Thursday that the timing of the release of the tape transcripts and the evidentiary material was "more than a coincidence" and that the President's foes were seeking to build a campaign "not to educate the public but to condition the public and manipulate it."

But Nixon's lawyer, James D. St. Clair, has been insisting all along that the hearings in which the evidence was presented should be opened.

St. Clair put the heavy end of his batting order of defense witnesses in front of the committee over the past two weeks and even GOP committee members who heard them said they added little or nothing to what was already known.

St. Clair had hoped, from all reports, that he would be able — given his considerable skill as a trial lawyer — to break down Nixon's former counsel and now chief accuser, John Dean.

But two key Republicans

on the committee did not think St. Clair was successful.

Rep. Robert McClory of Illinois, the second-ranking GOP member, said that "in my opinion, he was a damaging witness as far as the President was concerned."

And Rep. Tom Railsback, also of Illinois, said during a break in Dean's nine-hour stint in the witness chair that St. Clair "is trying to be rough on Dean but he isn't getting away with it."

Railsback, who has refrained from commenting on evidence during the six weeks' presentation, said Wednesday about Nixon's March 22 remark on coverup that he had found it "very relevant . . . very important and very significant."

Railsback and McClory are generally regarded as two of the most important of the six or seven GOP "swing" votes when the time comes to vote on impeachment.