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# Strauss Calls Case Against

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Democratic National Chairman Robert S. Strauss said yesterday the case against President Nixon is so "devastating and overwhelming" that it would be "incredible" if he were not impeached.

The comment broke a long silence by Strauss on the impeachment issue and brought immediate White House and Republican complaints.

"It's tragic that anything as serious as this should become, in effect, a Democratic Party platform item," said White House counselor Dean Burch.

"It's not wrong for anyone to have an opinion on the

case," said Republican National Chairman George Bush, "but his saying the President ought to be impeached will not contribute to that end . . . If it's an effort to make this a partisan thing, it's wrong."

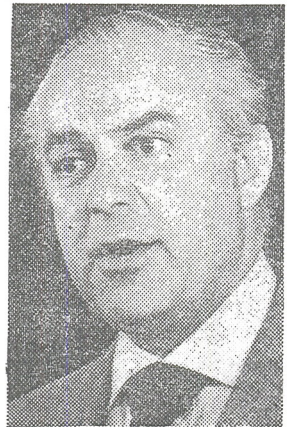
Strauss's comment, made at a breakfast session with reporters, marked a sharp break from his past practice of saying it would be "inappropriate" for him to comment from his partisan post on the impeachment question.

While declining to forecast the outcome of a possible Senate trial or to express a personal judgment on whether Mr. Nixon ultimately should be removed from office, Strauss said a weekend of reading the Judiciary Committee and

White House transcripts convinced him as a lawyer that "any reasonable person would have to come to the conclusion that the total body of the evidence preponderates substantially, even overwhelming, against the President."

Strauss said he would be "shocked" if the House Judiciary Committee failed to vote impeachment, and "very surprised" if the full House did not follow suit.

Strauss conceded that "quite a number of Democrats have been giving me hell because the President hasn't been impeached yet," but he denied that his statement represented a change of tactics by the party leadership in an effort to solidify Democratic support for the approaching House impeachment vote. He



ROBERT S. STRAUSS  
... "devastating" case

said he was not seeking votes for impeachment and felt the best course for any congress-

## Nixon 'Overwhelming'

man was to "vote his conscience."

Nonetheless, Strauss' statement caught congressional Democratic leaders by surprise and added to a climate of partisanship some of them have been laboring to combat.

"This is too grave a matter to let partisanship in," said Judiciary Chairman Peter W. Rodino Jr. (D-N.J.). House Majority Leader Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. (D-Mass.) said he and Speaker Carl Albert (D-Okla.) had always stressed to Strauss their desire "to keep it [the impeachment process] as nonpartisan as possible."

O'Neill said he did not think Strauss' comments would affect the House voting.

But Burch, who has led the White House attack on the Judiciary Committee proceedings, jumped on Strauss' state-

ments as evidence of partisanship.

"I've maintained from the first day that after you sweep aside the legal verbiage, impeachment becomes a political trial," Burch said. "His statement simply proves it."

Anne Armstrong, another White House counselor, suggested Strauss was trying to preserve a fragile Democratic unity with the impeachment issue.

"Right now, they have a great big Band-Aid holding them together—Watergate," she said. "When it gets ripped off, watch out."

Until Strauss' comments, both party's campaign arms had been wary of the impeachment question — for reasons of practical politics as well as propriety.

Although Strauss main-

tained yesterday that Vice President Ford would be "very beatable" even if he were the incumbent President in 1976, many Democratic strategists concede privately that the party's chances of winning the presidency would be greater if Mr. Nixon were allowed to serve out his term.

Meanwhile, Republican campaign chiefs have been reluctant to tie themselves too closely to the President. Rep. Robert H. Michel (R-Ill.), chairman of the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee, said he had avoided "putting out a party line, because I'm not that certain which way it will cut."

Michel said he thought the President could avoid impeachment, but said "we have to stay kind of flexible

yet," pending the Supreme Court decision and other uncertainties.

Bush, whose headquarters contains abundant supplies of "Support the President" and "Get Off His Back" bumper stickers, said he is still trying to draw a line between the Republican Party and the impeachment issue.

"I've said that I think the President's position is firmer now than it was five or six weeks ago," Bush said, "and I've said my judgement is that he won't be impeached." "But I've also made it clear that I am not a lawyer and I haven't studied all the evidence. I've said the system should be allowed to work, and as Republicans, we should abide by the decision of Congress and the Supreme Court."