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WXPost *The Judiciary Committee's Work*

THE PROCEEDINGS of the House Judiciary Committee have set an elevated and distinguished standard of judgment for all that must now follow. The Committee's debate has served to illuminate for the whole country the nature of political responsibility as Americans have traditionally understood it. The Committee has concentrated on the most important charges, and it has drawn them up in terms that ground them directly on the Constitution. In the Committee's debates, the opposition to impeachment has been carried on at a considerably higher level than any defense that the White House has ever provided for itself over these past two years. In a time of great scandal and public dismay, the televised debates have suddenly shown the country that its political system is working surely, conscientiously and effectively. The idea that all of American politics had fallen into decay has been demonstrated to be manifestly wrong. One element of our government went grievously astray, and now Congress is carefully proceeding to correct these errors.

It follows the American style of politics that the crucial decisions, in defining the articles of impeachment, should be left to the men in the middle who are prepared to make a majority either way. Looking to the swing votes, in this instance, serves the valuable purpose of giving the final word to those members least suspected of partisan interest or personal animus. In recent days this newspaper has argued that the articles of impeachment should include various offenses that the Committee is evidently going to leave out. But we concede that the most serious and substantial issues raised by the President's conduct are covered in Articles I and II, those concerning the Watergate affair and the violations of the presidential oath. If the President is to be tried in the Senate, it must be on charges supported by the widest possible majority of the Committee, and of the citizens whom they represent. Those, clearly, are the charges contained in the first two articles of the emerging bill.

If the President is actually to be removed from office, it is also imperative that the greatest possible number of Americans understand how and why. The Judiciary Committee is being proved abundantly right in opening its sessions to television, so that citizens have been able to follow for themselves each step of its labors. It is equally necessary that citizens throughout the country have similar access to the debate in the House of Representatives and, if it comes to that, the Senate trial.

The debates within the Judiciary Committee have served better than anything over the past two years to focus the tremendous public issues that the accumulated evidence now presents. Ever since the original Watergate burglary, most citizens have been trying to comprehend the case by piecing together fragments of information as each of them came to light. The Committee's long examination of evidence behind closed doors, with the steady dribble of leaks, made it clear that some of the fragments seemed to be incriminating. But it has only been the Committee's open discussions over the past nine days that have made the central question clear and graphic. The record shows that the President and some of his immediate subordinates engaged in a widespread and consistent pattern of overstepping the boundaries that the law sets on their power. The question was whether those offenses constitute a sufficient threat to constitutional government to require the removal of the President. Those who have watched the Committee know not only what it answered, but how it arrived at that answer.

Perhaps, come to think of it, there was still another question—whether the country cared enough about the Constitution, and the limits that it sets on political power, to go through the long and extremely difficult process of enforcing it. The Judiciary Committee has launched Congress well on its way to answering that question as well. It seems scarcely necessary for us to add our view that the case laid out in the Committee is more than sufficient to justify a vote of impeachment by the House and a Senate trial.