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Unit Erases Impeach Mail List

By Miles Benson

Newhouse News Service

A computerized list of 750,000 Americans who urged the impeachment of President Nixon was destroyed by the House Judiciary Committee chairman, Peter W. Rodino Jr. (D-N.J.), to prevent its use by Democrats trying to raise money for presidential campaigns.

A list of 150,000 persons who opposed impeachment also was erased.

"There were two master reels containing the names and addresses of everybody who wrote the Judiciary Committee during the impeachment inquiry," a spokesman for Rodino disclosed. "Both were destroyed at Rodino's direction.

"We were very nervous about the pro-impeachment list being misused. It would have been a real prize for the direct mail fund-raisers—a list of people to whom morality was such an important issue. It would have been the best issue list going. We would have been under tremendous pressure for it. That's why we destroyed it."

The spokesman for Rodino, who in Florida, said the impeachment mailing list was placed on computer tape because Rodino wanted to answer every person who wrote to the Judiciary Committee.

He said the list could be reconstructed because the letters themselves are in the National Archives, "but it would be a laborious process."

Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.) made effective use of a computerized mailing list of persons opposed to the Vietnam war to help finance his successful 1972 drive for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Several Democratic presidential hopefuls already have begun direct fund-raising for next year's presidential primaries.

When one of them, Rep. Morris K. Udall of Arizona, heard about the impeachment list from a reporter, his immediate reaction was: "I should get that list."

The 1976 presidential election is to be financed entirely out of U.S. Treasury funds, but candidates must raise some money privately to finance their primary campaigns.

This has led to earlier-than-usual fund-raising. If a candidate can raise \$5,000 in each of 20 states, all in contributions of \$250 or less, the Treasury will match each privately raised dollar with a public dollar. Direct mail fund-raising is particularly suited to bringing in small contributions.