

Judiciary Probe in Public

A Motion to Impeach

Washington.

Opening its impeachment inquiry to all America, the House Judiciary Committee began formal debate last night on a recommendation that President Nixon be removed from office for having "prevented, obstructed and impeded the administration of justice."

It was only the second time in the annals of the Republic that the presidential impeachment process had come this far.

The three-hour nationally broadcast start of debate — marked by two telephone bomb threats — brought no unexpected shifts in committee members' positions for or against impeachment.

Of the 11 committee members to speak, four Democrats called for Mr. Nixon's impeachment and one Republican said no. The other two Democrats didn't say how they would vote. Four Republicans also deferred open commitment.

The Republican who spoke against impeachment, Representative Charles W. Sandman Jr. of New Jersey, nonetheless said there is no doubt the committee will vote against Mr. Nixon.

"There's no use kidding anybody about that," he declared of the outcome of the committee vote targeted for this weekend.

After months of investigation and weeks of closed-door hearings, the committee allowed the public through television and radio to watch and listen to its climactic debate.

An hour after it began, the session was forced into an abrupt 47-minute recess by a telephoned bomb threat received by a capitol operator. Another bomb threat was received just as the committee quit for the night.

Before pausing while police made the search, the

panel was formally presented with a pair of proposed articles of impeachment by a Democrat and heard Republicans suggest a delay in the nationally televised debate.

Offered by the committee's second-ranking Democrat, Representative Harold D. Donohue of Massachusetts, the impeachment resolution's two articles charged Mr. Nixon with obstruction of justice in the Watergate investigation and with otherwise abusing the powers of his office.

In a last-minute change, a third article charging the President with contempt of Congress — for his refusal to comply with committee subpoenas — was merged into the second article.

Each of the two articles proposed by Donohue ticked off in legal language a number of specific allegations. They concluded that "Richard M. Nixon by such conduct warrants impeachment

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and trial and removal from office."

Chairman Peter W. Rodino (Dem-N.J.) told the committee in his opening statement that after months of investigation of Watergate and other scandals the nation "demands that we make up our minds."

Then came a suggestion for delay from Representative Edward Hutchinson of Michigan, the ranking Republican, who cited yesterday's unanimous Supreme Court order that Mr. Nixon turn over 64 tape-recorded conversations for the Watergate coverup trial. Barely a half hour before the debate started, Mr. Nixon's lawyer announced the President would comply "in all respects" with the court.

But Hutchinson didn't press his suggestion and Donohue, the white-haired, second-ranking committee

Democrat, was recognized to present the impeachment articles.

Representative Donald Edwards (Dem-Calif.) said he has concluded, after reviewing all the evidence, that Mr. Nixon "has consciously and intentionally engaged in serious misdeeds; that he has corrupted and subverted our political and governmental processes" to the extent that he should be impeached and tried in the Senate.

Speculating that the majority of the committee members support his conclusion, he added, "I am willing to face my constituents, my family, myself and history with this sober conviction."

Representative Jack Brooks (Dem-Tex.) said in his opening statement that the committee in ten weeks of closed sessions into Mr. Nixon's affairs had seen "evidence of governmental corruption unequalled in the history of the United States."

He specifically cited "the coverup of crimes and obstructing the prosecution of criminals, surreptitious entries and wiretapping for political purposes, suspension of civil liberties of every American, tax violations and personal enrichment at public expense, bribery and blackmail, flagrant misuse of the FBI, the CIA and the IRS."

Brooks said the committee must decide whether Mr. Nixon was involved in any of the crimes for which many of his aides were convicted and whether he has "brought isgrace and disrespect to the office of the president."

"We must immediately put to rest the argument that the corruption we have witnessed in the last five years is only an extension of what has always been done," Brooks added.

More than 100 years ago, a similar debate concerning President Andrew Johnson resulted in vote by the

House to impeach. In the subsequent Senate trial, impeachment forces failed by one vote, and Johnson remained in office.

Representative Henry P. Smith III of New York, the third Republican to speak, said he had determined that except in the case of the President's role in the secret bombing of Cambodia, an allegation on which he said he has not yet made up his mind, "I should have to vote against impeachment of the President on the state of the evidence we have seen."

Smith then joined Hutchinson and Representative Robert McClory (Rep-Ill.) in calling upon the committee to renew its efforts to obtain White House tapes.

Next before the microphone was Representative Robert W. Kastenmeier (Dem-Wis.) who as expected declared Mr. Nixon should be impeached. "I believe clear and compelling evidence does exist," Kastenmeier said, adding that "In my view Richard Nixon has shown disrespect for citizens of this country."

One of the most emotional speeches of the evening occurred when Representative Tom Railsback of Illinois, one of the committee Republicans regarded as leaning toward impeachment, said, "I'm concerned about the President's actions . . . I am concerned . . . I wish the President could do something to absolve himself . . ."

Railsback said his concern focused primarily on Mr. Nixon's role in efforts to get the IRS to audit the tax returns of political opponents as well as the President's actions in dealing with the Watergate break-in and coverup.

But in his opening statement, the Illinois Republican stopped short of declaring how he intended to vote.

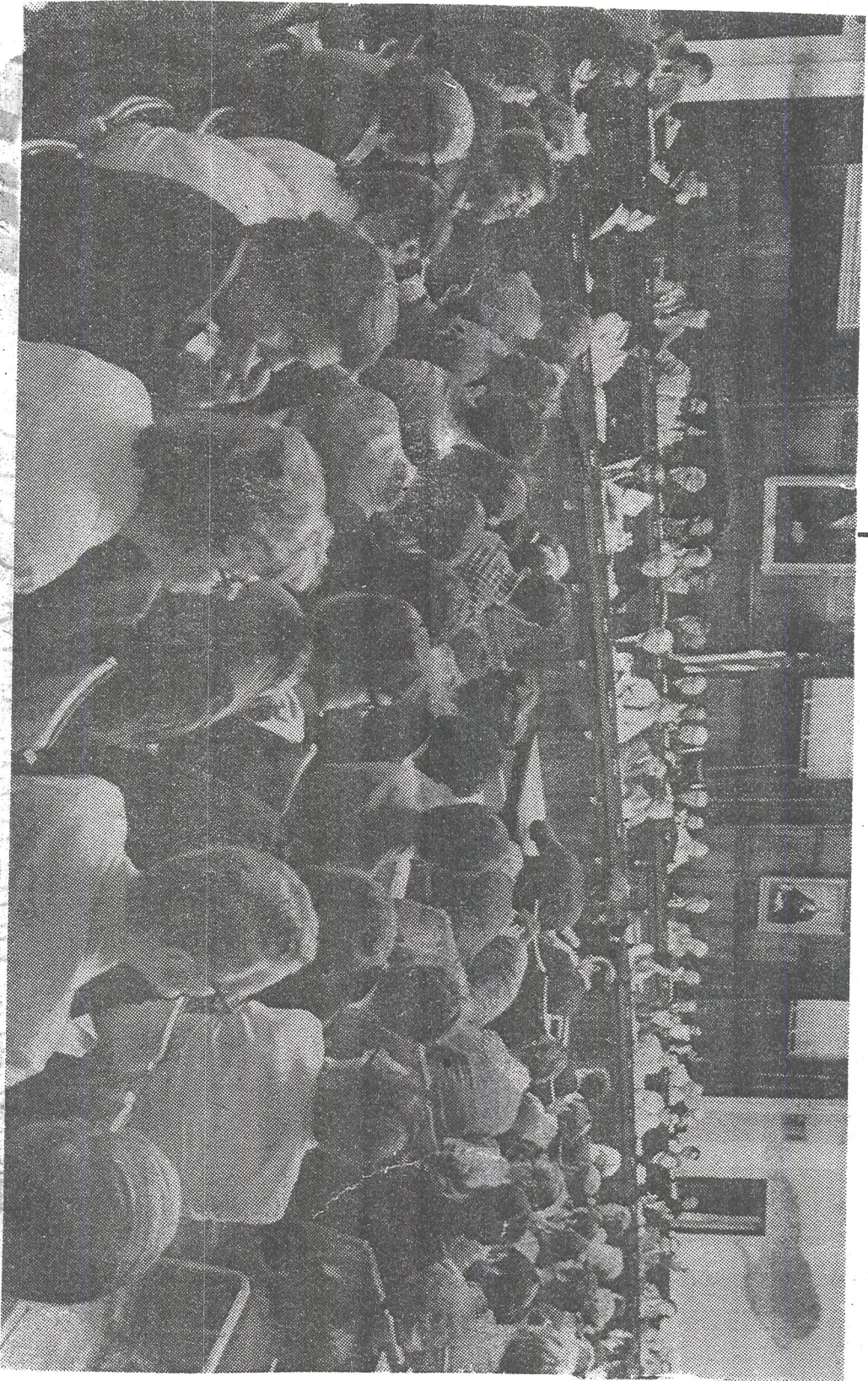
Railsback had reached the words "I'm concerned about the President's actions" when Rodino announced that his 15 minutes had expired.

But Representative William E. Hungate (Dem-Mo.), the next member in line to speak, yielded two minutes of his time to allow Railsback to finish. ½

Hungate closed the evening session by declaring the committee must find Mr. Nixon faithless to his duty.

Hungate, who once composed and recorded a satiric Watergate ballad, used several difference vocal accents Wednesday in a critical reenactment of Mr. Nixon's March 21, 1973, meeting with John W. Dean III.

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The House Judiciary Committee as its debate on the impeachment of President Nixon began

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