

Rodino Vows Fair Impeachment Inquiry

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 29—The chairman of the Congressional committee inquiring into the possible impeachment of President Nixon pledged today to conduct a cautious, thorough and bipartisan investigation.

Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr. of New Jersey, whose House Judiciary Committee will meet tomorrow to set some procedural guidelines for the impeachment inquiry, said in an interview tonight that "this cannot be a partisan effort."

There may be some, in the Congress and the nation, who already have decided whether the President ought to be impeached, the Democratic chairman said, but his mail indicates that "many others are looking to us for guidance."

Mr. Rodino's judgment appeared to be borne out in the findings of the latest Gallup poll, which indicated today that a majority of Americans had lost confidence in the Nixon Administration but were nonetheless reluctant to seek the President's removal from office.

The Gallup findings on the impeachment issue were in contrast to an unparalleled outpouring of letters, telegrams and telephone calls to members of Congress urging that Mr. Nixon be impeached by the House and tried by the Senate.

An assistant to Representative Rodino said that 18,000 messages had been received at his office by last weekend, calling for the removal of the President by impeachment and trial or resignation. Only about 300 messages expressed support for Mr. Nixon, the assistant said.

The Gallup organization reported, however, that 55 per cent of the 623 voters questioned by telephone Friday night — after Mr. Nixon declared at a news conference that he would remain in office

—said they did not favor impeachment and 62 per cent were opposed to resignation by Mr. Nixon.

Asked whether the President "should be impeached and compelled to leave the Presidency or not," 28 per cent said he should leave and 27 per cent of those polled had no opinion.

According to the Gallup findings, an identical 28 per cent of those interviewed believe that "it would be in the best interests of the country for President Nixon to resign at this time," while 10 per cent voiced no opinion.

Even so, the poll reflected a continued lack of public confidence in Mr. Nixon's administration. A total of 55 per cent of those interviewed said that they had either "not very much" or no trust and confidence "at all" in Mr. Nixon's handling of his duties. Some 19 per cent expressed a "great deal" of confidence in the President, while 23 per cent said that they had a "fair amount" and the remaining 3 per cent expressed no view.

Six out of 10 of the individuals questioned by the Gallup organization said that they watched Mr. Nixon's televised news conference on Friday.

Majority Unconvinced

Among those voters who had watched the news conference, 53 per cent said that they had not found Mr. Nixon's comments on the Watergate scandal convincing, 31 per cent found his answers convincing, 9 per cent had mixed views on the issue and the other 7 per cent expressed no opinion.

Individuals who responded to the Gallup poll voiced solid support for swift confirmation of Gerald R. Ford, the House Republican leader, as Vice President. Asked whether they thought the nomination should be approved by Congress, 63 per cent of those interviewed said yes, 17 per cent said no and 20 per cent expressed no opinion.

In an action related to the Watergate scandal, the House Judiciary subcommittee on criminal justice unanimously approved today a bill that would extend to June 4, 1974 — the life of a Federal grand jury that has been investigating the June 17, 1972, burglary of the Democratic party's Watergate offices.

The bill approved by the subcommittee today, and scheduled for a vote of the full Judiciary Committee tomorrow, would also empower Chief Judge John J. Sirica of the United State District Court here to extend the term of the grand jury an additional six months, to Dec. 4 of next year, if he considered it necessary.

Under the normal rules of procedure in Federal courts, a grand jury must go out of existence after 18 months. The grand jury that has been hearing evidence on the Watergate burglary was empaneled on June 5, 1972, and thus would not be able to continue taking evidence after Dec. 4 unless Congress approved an extension. A second grand jury, empaneled Aug. 13 at the request of Mr. Cox to investigate a number of other matters involving the Nixon Administration, is not affected by the legislation.

Democrats Favored for House

WASHINGTON, Oct. 29 (Reuters)—The Democratic party has gained more in popularity over the Republicans than at any time in the last decade, a national public opinion poll by the Louis Harris organization indicated today.

About 53 per cent of those interviewed said they would vote for Democratic candidates in next year's house elections. Some 31 per cent preferred Republicans.

The Democrats had a 56 to 44 per cent margin in the popular vote in last year's election for the House.