

A Million Wires, Letters

Washington

The dismissal of special Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox and the subsequent confusion over the security of the Watergate tapes has stimulated an estimated million or more Americans into an unprecedented outpouring of public opinion through the mails and the telegraph wires.

In the 24 days since Cox was fired and attorney general Elliot L. Richardson and his deputy, William D. Ruckelshaus, quit in protest, more than 400,000 paid public opinion telegrams have been received at Capitol Hill offices, the White House and various prosecutorial agencies.

Moreover, an even larger number of mailed letters has descended on congressional offices, prompting one senator to observe, "this is the biggest demonstration of protest this town has ever seen."

Counting telegrams only, a Western Union Co. official said the volume of messages far outstripped previous records set during the 1951 espionage trials of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg and during the My Lai massacre trial of Army Lt. William Calley.

CRITICAL

The vast majority of opinion messages sent here during the past three weeks, according to a Washington Post survey, advocated the impeachment of President Nixon, or otherwise expressed criticism of his administration.

The floodtide of messages has receded slightly in the past week, however, and some recipients of the greatest bulk of letters reported a gradual — if modest — upswing in favor of Mr. Nixon.

The White House, which has declined to release a statistical accounting of the public reaction to Cox's firing, said the president's November 5 message on the energy crisis and his televised comments on the han-

dling of Watergate resulted in a distinct trend of favorable public reaction.

RECIPIENTS

Predictably, the largest number of impeachment demands have been received by nationally-known democratic and liberal republican senators and congressmen, and by the committees that are considering 11 separate impeachment resolutions or are investigating the alleged misdeeds of the Nixon administration.

For example, letters are pouring into the offices of the House Judiciary Committee at the rate of 5000 to 6000 a day, and are running better than 35 to 1 in favor of impeachment.

By the end of last week, the committee had tallied 76834 persons favoring impeachment and 2168 against impeachment and favoring Mrs. Nixon. Depending on the daily developments of the controversial tapes issue, the committee's mail has ranged from a low of 5000 to as many as 17,000 a day, according to an aide. **ERVINGROUP**

Since the October 22 "Saturday night massacre," in which Cox was fired and Ri-

chardson and Ruckelshaus resigned, the senate select committee has received 32,316 telegrams and letters, 19,392 of which urged impeachment of Mrs. Nixon, a committee official said.

Only 2062 of the public opinion messages availed support of the President's Watergate position, with the remainder addressing issues not related to Mrs. Nixon's position, a staff member said.

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