

Cox Firing Sparks a Million

By William Claiborne
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The dismissal of Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox and the subsequent confusion over the security of the White House tape recordings has stimulated an estimated million or more Americans into an unprecedented outpouring of 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 public opinion telegrams have been received at Capitol Hill offices, the White House and various prosecutorial agencies.

Moreover, an even larger number of 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 official said the volume of messages far outstripped records set during the 1951 espionage trials of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg and during the Mylai massacre trial of Army Lt. William Calley.

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 flood 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 account of the reaction to Cox's firing, said the President's Nov. 5 message on the energy crisis and his televised postscript on Watergate resulted in a distinct trend of favorable reaction.

But, the total of adverse commentary recorded in government offices outside the executive branch seems to have caught the attention of administration officials.

Vice President-designate Gerald R. Ford yesterday urged Mr. Nixon's supporters to "speak up and speak now" to offset the demands for impeachment or resignation from the President's opponents.

"Congressional offices have been bombarded with letters and telegrams . . .," Ford said, in a speech before the National Association of Realtors here. "Meanwhile, the famous 'silent majority' has been living up to its name."

In what seemed to be an effort to equalize the lopsided telegram outpouring on the President's handling of the Watergate affair,

Ford urged his audience to "express your personal view to your senators and congressmen."

"If you really believe that impeachment or resignation is the only answer, by all means say so. But, if you are part of that much larger group that believes in fair play and in the important things that Richard Nixon has done and can do for America . . . speak up and speak up now," Ford said.

Ford said a number of "pressure groups" had been busily urging letter-writing campaigns, apparently referring to the American Civil Liberties Union, which bought full-page newspaper advertisements urging impeachment, and consumer advocate Ralph Nader, who called for letters and telegrams to Congress.

A spot check by one senator, Ford said, showed most of the pro-impeachment letters came from persons who voted against Mr. Nixon. "They were trying to use Watergate as a weapon to reverse an election they didn't agree with and didn't win," Ford said.

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

For example, letters are pouring into the office of the House Judiciary Committee at the rate of 5,000 to 6,000 a day, and are running better than 35 to 1 in favor of impeachment.

By the end of last week, the committee had tallied 76,834 persons favoring impeachment and 2,168 against impeachment and favoring Mr. Nixon. Depending on the daily developments of the tapes issue, the committee's mail has ranged from 5,000 to 17,000 a day, according to an aide.

Since the Oct. 20 "Saturday night massacre," when Cox was fired and Richardson and Ruckelshaus resigned, the Senate select Watergate committee has received 32,316 telegrams and letters, 19,392 of which urged impeachment of Mr. Nixon, a committee official said.

Only 2,062 of the public opinion messages expressed support of the President's Watergate position, with the remainder addressing issues not related to Mr. Nixon's position, a staff member said yesterday.

The special prosecutor's office has received about 8,000 telegrams and letters, of which only about 50 opposed Cox's insistence that the White House tapes be turned over for presentation to a grand jury, according to a spokesman.

"Chain yourself to your

desks," one writer urged the lawyers of the special prosecutor's office.

Another telegram declared: "Congratulations on your staunch spirit and your willingness to fight." It was signed, "All 1,000 of us in East Redwood City, Calif."

Common characteristics of the telegrams sent to Capitol Hill were brevity and causticism, the former resulting apparently from Western Union's 15-word limit for a \$2 public opinion telegram.

"No more Nixon tricks—Impeach him now," wrote a constituent of Sen. Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.).

"We are not prepared to live under a dictatorship—Impeachment," said a tele-

gram to Sen. Dick Clark (D-Iowa). A constituent of Sen. Walter F. Mondale (D-Minn.) wrote simply, "Impeach King Nixon."

Those opposing impeachment were equally emphatic.

Rep. Peter Rodino Jr. (D-N.J.), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, received a letter from a Riverside, Ill., man, who wrote: "I am against impeachment or resignation or anything curtailing his normal functions as President. I am fed up with Watergates and other hysterias worked up by the news media."

However, an imbalance of the number of messages toward an anti-administration position appeared to cut

Opinions, Mostly



GERALD R. FORD

... 'speak up . . . speak now'

across party and philosophical lines, according to a survey of Capitol Hill offices.

Aides to Sen. Jacob Javits, a liberal Republican from New York, said yesterday that they had received 33,396 messages against the President, and 2,189 favoring Mr. Nixon's handling of Watergate. The office of Sen. James L. Buckley, a Republican Conservative from New York, said it had received about 20,000 letters and telegrams which initially ran 98 per cent for impeachment, but have recently dropped to 90 per cent for impeachment or resignation.

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) had received 13,042 pro-impeachment messages and 1,238 supporting Mr. Nixon, while the mail of

Anti-Nixon

Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) was running against the President, 3,749 to 1,396 through Oct. 31. Since Oct. 31, the ratio has been 1,716 for Mr. Nixon and 1,258 against him, aides to Goldwater said.

Some other tallies reported by senators:

Sen. John V. Tunney (D-Calif.), 26,870 to 2,312 for impeachment or resignation; Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.), 24,487 to 2,620 in favor of impeachment or resignation; Sen. Charles H. Percy (R-Ill.), 23,000 letters and telegrams, running 6 to 1 for impeachment before Mr. Nixon's capitulation on the tapes issue and 4 to 1 for impeachment since then.

Also: Sen. Richard S.

Schweiker (R-Pa.), 8,408 for impeachment and 1,039 supporting the President, and Sen. William B. Saxbe (R-Ohio), who is Attorney General designate, 9,768 for impeachment or resignation and 842 in favor of Mr. Nixon.

The individual members of the Senate select Watergate committee reported receiving 2,000 to 4,000 letters and telegrams apiece, with an average pro-impeachment ratio of about 10 to 1.

A survey of members of the House showed a similar volume of mail and telegrams, with a similar proportion of messages against the administration's handling of Watergate.