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The cloud which hangs over the Nixon presidency is about to break in a deluge over Washington, a noisy and perhaps angry interlude in which millions of citizens raise their voices on impeachment, pro and con.

Today when the senators and congressmen go back to work, they will find a throng of young people from the Unification Church praying on the Capitol steps — praying that President Nixon and the nation are delivered safely from the Watergate crisis.

Saturday night, a fledgling group called the Washington Area Impeachment Coalition celebrated the issue with an "Impeachment Ball," held on the approximate anniversary of the Nixon inaugural last year. Phil Ochs, whose protest songs stirred antiwar rallies for years, entertained.

In the university town of Madison, Wis., two groups are competing for the allegiance of impeachment supporters. One of them, organized by the mayor, is a coalition of respectable liberal groups from labor unions to the local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union. They are lobbying the state legislature for an impeachment resolution. The other group, composed of New Left remnants on the University of Wisconsin campus, calls itself "The Coali-

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tion to Throw the Bum Out."

In McAllen, Tex., a farmer named Othal Brand, founder of the "Committee to Support the President," chats long-distance with dozens of other "grass roots" groups across the nation, all of them rallying citizens to the President's side.

"The House Judiciary Committee," he said, they're going to have several thousand people to contend with when they open up their hearings, people coming from all over to express their dissatisfaction with the news media and the eastern liberal establishment. We're just damned tired of it, to speak in plain English."

In New York City, a magazine editor named Charles Mee Jr., editor of Horizon, presides over a sophisticated direct-mail operation that is

sending pro-impeachment literature to millions of "middle-of-the-road" Americans. With the help of a computer and zip codes, Mee's "National Committee on the Presidency" intends to zero in on voters in 60 key congressional districts, where public pressure could swing moderate congressmen.

In Washington, "Americans for the Presidency" is working the other side of the street. Led by Donald M. Kendall, Pepsi Co., president and old friend of Mr. Nixon's, the group is hitting 40 to 50 Sunday newspapers with full-page ads — including mail-in coupons supporting the White House. The big-name sponsors include Norman Vincent Peale, Bob Hope, Teamsters President Frank Fitzsimmons and two top figures from the Johnson administration, Eugene Rostow and John T. Connor.

Thus, even now, the outline of an epic struggle is emerging — the political battle over the fate of Richard M. Nixon.

Scores of "grass roots" organizations — maybe hundreds of them — have already sprung up around the nation on both sides of impeachment. Public celebrities from Mamie Eisenhower to Ralph Nader have joined the fray. Massive letter-writing and petitions, professional and amateur lobbying, guerrilla theater and political reprisals — all seem inevitable from the activities thus far.

As in every great issue, from the abolition of slavery to the prohibition of whiskey, the views of articulate minorities, mobilized to express themselves, will exert a disproportionate effect on the course of American history. Even now, for example, after several traumatic months of heavy mail on the subject, Congress has still only heard from a relative handful of voting-age citizens — no more than 5 percent, according to the Gallup Poll.

Both sides understand this factor and are gearing up accordingly. The established liberal-labor groups which are pushing impeachment seem to have the overwhelming advantage in terms of organized lobbying machinery already available in Washington. But the conservative pro-Nixon groups are hoping to catch up — by opening several new anti-impeachment offices in the capital.

From the tone of it so far, the struggle could turn ugly — a rancorous revival of the

social and political sentiments which have been so divisive in the recent past. The issue, of course, will be President Nixon's guilt or innocence, but the rhetoric already suggests the presence of companion hostilities.

The "silent majority" and the war in Vietnam, the eastern liberal establishment and the news media, resentments toward big business and big labor, the cynicism of radical youth and the fears of so-called "middle Americans" — the flavor of antagonisms from the 1960s seems to be circling around the impeachment issue.

Charles Morgan Jr., the civil rights veteran who is leading the ACLU's national campaign, describes how the impeachment cause has reunited a lot of old friends from left of center:

"There's no civil rights movement. There's no war. There's no social-action movement. I hate to use the word, but it's liberal chic. Impeachment is there. It's not ecology, but then whatever happened to ecology?"

Rabbi Baruch Korff, the Providence, R.I., rabbi whose "Fairness to the Presidency" campaign now claims 150,000 members, describes a similar effect on his pro-Nixon constituency:

"What I am actually representing is middle America, people who are not regimented, who are not professional agitators. They're free souls and they're not given to the type of organizations that liberals and leftists who are professional protestors have. But it's amazing how they are adapting to it."

For instance, Korff's committee has raised about \$400,000 so far through a series of eight newspaper ads with catchy titles like: "Assassins" and "The Rape of America" and "Mr. President, We Shall Persist." Nearly all of that money is going back into more advertising, plus the distribution of several million anti-media stickers, warning the TV networks that sponsor boycotts are the next weapon if they don't get off the President's back.

"I just returned from New York to consolidate a piece of evidence on who is behind the impeachment group," the rabbi said, "and we are satisfied there is a conspiracy dating back to the days when Richard

Nixon was a member of the House Un-American Activities Committee and was investigating Alger Hiss." Korff plans to name names at an upcoming press conference.

ference.

The ACLU, which was out in front of other liberal groups in calling for impeachment, has found it the most energizing issue the organization has had in years. Local ACLU affiliates are helping to set up "impeachment coalitions" like "Commonsense" in Philadelphia and "Prairie Fire" in Minneapolis. The national ACLU spent \$106,000 running its first ads in 20 states—and got back \$138,000 in contributions.

"Can you imagine that?" said Morgan. "The ACLU made a little profit."

For some others, however, people who also cherish civil liberties, there is a problem in the lobbying drive which is now building.

Is it right, they ask, to lobby the House and especially the House Judiciary Committee when those congressmen are, in effect, operating as a grand jury—supposedly weighing evidence to indict the President for a trial by the Senate?

That question forced a sharp debate within the NAACP, which normally

would be lobbying side-by-side with the AFL-CIO, the ACLU, ADA and other liberal groups. But Clarence Mitchell, the NAACP's chief lobbyist, and Roy Wilkins, the executive director, won a "hands-off" declaration from the board of directors last week, despite the efforts of Washington lawyer Joseph Rauh, an NAACP board member, to push an impeachment position.

Instead, the civil rights organization issued a peculiarly worded resolution which says Mr. Nixon is entitled to "the presumption of innocence" even though the NAACP believes he is guilty.

Clarence Mitchell fears that, Mr. Nixon's impeachment is forced by the pressure of public emotion rather than by hard evidence, it will create a dangerous precedent that could someday drive good men from high office—when they defend an unpopular cause. The House expulsion of black congressman Adam Clayton Powell and the unsuccessful impeachment drives against chief Justice Earl Warren and Associate Justice William O. Douglas of the Supreme Court were examples, he thinks, of public opinion aimed at driving out men who defended the interests of minority groups, particularly black people.

"Now the shoe is on the other foot," Mitchell said, "and no matter how I feel about the President—remember, I was on the White House enemies list—I just

don't believe you should set a precedent that might rise to haunt us later on."

What Mitchell fears, ironically, is what some of the pro-Nixon groups have a ready complained about—a lynch psychology.

"Some of us," the NAACP lobbyist said, "have lived through experiences when emotions ran so high that there was no way you could defend a man. You be cut down and killed for saying that a man deserved a fair trial. When you think of that spirit running on a national scale, it's a very sobering thing."

Mitchell's complaint is probably academic. What's clear is that both sides are going to lobby anyway, encouraged in part by House members themselves who have made it obvious again and again that public opinion would strongly influence their votes on indicting the President. For that matter, the President himself has lobbied the "jury" by discussing the case privately with various congressmen. Those congressmen who only want to consider evidence are going to feel the heat of public pressure whether they like it or not.

Besides the NAACP, the usual line-up of liberal-labor forces has some other groups missing from its ranks—Jewish organizations which apparently fear that a strong position on impeaching Nixon might jeopardize Israel's prospects in the Middle East settlement.

"I'm sympathetic with the

Jewish groups," said Rauth, "because Nixon is obviously holding Israel hostage. I don't agree with them, but I'm sympathetic."

In any case, the main engine of impeachment activity appears to be organized labor—the AFL-CIO and the United Auto Workers. Since the labor federation's October convention called for impeachment, the AFL-CIO has sent out four million copies of its 19-point bill of particulars, plus 500,000 copies of the 10 weekly installments on the major charges against Mr. Nixon. About 150 labor newspapers have reprinted the material, reaching nearly 10 million union members.

The impeachment forces figure that they have the best of the situation, mainly because public opinion polls indicate that the majority of Americans already regard Mr. Nixon as guilty. The task now, as they see it, is to educate the public and Congress on the meaning of impeachment. An impeachment vote by the House vote only a finding of probable cause that would then lead to a Senate trial, they point out. Impeachment, they will argue, is actually the way to end the disruption of government—by sending the President to trial and settling the scandal.

Judging from the mail and public-opinion polls, the union rank-and-file generally support AFL-CIO Presi-

dent George Meany's strong position. Al Zack, the AFL-CIO press director, said mail from union members is 6 to 1 in favor of impeachment. Among major unions, the Teamsters and the Seafarers International are the only ones supporting the President.

Over the holiday recess, state and local AFL-CIO officers touched base with their home congressmen on the subject. "They put three major things on the table," Zack said, "energy, minimum wage, and impeachment."

Labor lobbyists haven't done much leg work yet around congressional offices. But big labor has already been criticized for the clout it might wield—through its campaign money. Rep. John Erlenborn, a conservative Republican from Illinois, complained that the 19 Democrats on the House Judiciary Committee got \$189,000 in campaign contributions from labor unions in 1972—about 14 per cent of their financing. And the Judiciary Chairman Rep. Peter Rodino, of Newark, N.J., got about a third of his campaign money from labor, according to Erlenborn.

The AFL-CIO, said Zack, won't be distributing campaign funds in 1974 based solely on how congressmen vote on impeachment. "We're not a single-issue organization," he said. "If a guy votes 'yes' on impeachment and he's got a stinking

record on everything else, we won't be for him."

On the other hand, the National Committee for an Effective Congress, a reform group which distributed about \$1 million of 1972 campaign donations to liberals of both parties, said impeachment will influence its future gifts. "Clearly," said NCEC director Russell Hemenway, "that will be a major factor in making our decisions in 1974."

Those are the anti-Nixon forces. It is much harder to describe the shape of the President's support, partly because some of it is still getting organized and some of it is holding back. Some of the major lobbying organizations which generally support him on legislative issues are not exactly plunging into an anti-impeachment position.

The American Farm Bureau, for instance, adopted a resolution at its convention last week, echoing Vice President Ford's speech before its 5,000 delegates, when Ford urged Congress to make a speedy decision.

"Any further delay creates a cloud as to the integrity of Congress itself," the farm bureau warned. "This is no time for politics as usual."

But Donald Donnelly, farm bureau spokesman, said the organization can't take a stronger position in support of the President until it has a better idea of the evidence and charges.