

N<sup>Y</sup>Times  
**New, Confident Nixon** FEB. 18 1974

**Self-Assurance in Public Indicates His Belief That He Won't Be Impeached**

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Special to The New York Times

MIAMI, Feb. 17 — A new self-assurance in the White House appears to have dispelled a view of only a month ago that President Nixon was on the verge of resigning. Thus, while the House Judiciary Committee prepares for the opening of impeachment hearings Thursday, the atmosphere around Mr. Nixon is like that surrounding a candidate who has suffered all manner of reverses, but who now feels he can prevail in the end.

The President has been looking and performing well in public appearances, in sharp contrast to the periods of depression that were evident over the last year.

His assistants seem more optimistic and relaxed, with fewer signs of the weariness they displayed before. Plans for the President to make a European trip in the late spring are going forward.

Mr. Nixon has resumed his practice of flying himself and his assistants around the country in Air Force jets, as if he were no longer sensitive to public criticism that he might be setting a poor example in the energy crisis.

This new assertion of confidence is based on the belief of the President and his advisers that the House will not vote impeachment and, even if it should, the Senate will not convict him.

**Consistent Aspect**

The new posture calls for him once again to be a "strong President," exerting the doctrine of executive privilege even at the risk that the public will conclude that his refusal to turn over additional tapes and documents to the Watergate prosecution shows that he has something to hide.

He has left open the possibility that he will surrender the material at a later date, a position that is not so strong as the absolute one against disclosure that he pursued last summer nor as conciliatory as the one he adopted in the fall promising full disclosure.

This kind of zigzagging is characteristic of Mr. Nixon. In his first term he zigzagged on policy, and the position he has taken today on Watergate may not necessarily be his position a month from now. But in one sense, Mr. Nixon has been con-

sistent on Watergate: He has never chose to disclose more than seemed absolutely necessary at the time to maintain any degree of public confidence.

He is thus taking the risk that the refusal to release the documents entails and is moving out politically to defend his position before the public.

His appointment Friday of Dean Burch, a long-time political associate of Senator Barry Goldwater, as a Presidential counselor, was viewed as a means of shoring up his defenses against impeachment among conservatives of his own party, many of whom have been hostile to the President's position on Watergate.

Whatever the turn of events may be in the courts or in the House Judiciary Committee, Mr. Nixon's problem of credibility continues despite the new initiatives. His widely televised State of the Union Message in which he laid down his new hard line was interpreted by his supporters to have been a plus in his efforts to recoup lost support.

**Little Effect in Poll**

Yet a Gallup Poll taken after the speech and released last night showed it apparently had little immediate effect. The polls showed 28 per cent expressed approval of the way he was handling his job, while 59 per cent disapproved. The previous poll, taken from Jan. 18 to 21, showed 26 per cent approved and 64 per cent disapproved. The Gallup people said this amounted to "virtually no change."

He is, like Lyndon B. Johnson was in the face of Vietnam war criticism, becoming more and more limited as to where he can appear and speak. His appearances outside Washington in the last six months have been restricted almost wholly to conservative areas of the South, especially where Federal installations bring in large amounts of money, calculated to be at a minimum. The Secret Service is facing lawsuits charging it has restricted First Amendment rights in barring dissidents from his public appearances.

During an address here Thursday for a hospital dedication, the authorities allowed them on the fringe of the crowd and the President was barely able to have his remarks heard over the uproar.