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...With Responsibility

Representative Rodino, the committee chairman, has meanwhile acted responsibly with regard to the difficult issue of Mr. St. Clair's participation in the work of the committee. Under Representative Rodino's leadership, the committee Democrats have tentatively agreed to allow Mr. St. Clair to be present when the committee staff outlines possible charges against the President and the evidence for them. Mr. St. Clair would thereby gain a complete overview of the case against his client, a quite considerable advantage that many on the committee were initially reluctant to grant him. His subsequent role in the inquiry has been left for later determination pending the committee's decision on whether to have hearings and, if so, the scope of such hearings.

A sense of fairness and historical precedent both argue in favor of allowing the President's counsel to participate to some extent in reviewing the evidence. At the same time, a Democratic willingness to compromise on Mr. St. Clair's role has made it easier for the Republican members to take a firm stand against the White House's withholding of evidence. The issues in the impeachment inquiry are too grave for partisan squabbling. Thus far, a substantially united Judiciary Committee has shown that it is possible for men and women of conscience and goodwill to discharge a most difficult responsibility.