

About Impeachment

IN ITS EFFORTS to convey somewhat complicated concepts in a reasonably simple form, the press sometimes uses a type of shorthand which can be less than accurate.

Of late, this shorthand has been used to describe the House of Representatives as a "grand jury" in its investigations of the possible impeachment of President Nixon.

The intent, admirable of itself, was to tell the public that impeachment does not mean removal from office, but merely that the House feels sufficient cause exists that the President should be tried by the Senate.

In that, the House does act analogously to a grand jury.

BUT NOW COMES Congressman Jerome Waldie, a member of the House Judiciary Committee which is conducting the investigation, to note that like all analogies, this one limps.

Once a grand jury returns an indictment, it is finished with that particular case.

But the House, the Congressman notes, once it votes articles of impeachment, is charged by the Constitution also with conducting the prosecutions in the trial before the Senate.

Again under the Constitution, the House unlike a grand jury, initiates impeachment proceedings, and is the only agency with the power so to act.

Given the criticism from some quarters that the Representatives are not acting as proper grand jurors, Congressman Waldie's distinction between the functions of the two bodies is well taken and worthy of note.