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**Impeachment Case Poses  
Problems for the Press**

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WASHINGTON, May 21— It's the ultimate Washington news story, the possible impeachment of the President, so every day when the House Judiciary Committee is in session the corridors outside the hearing room are jammed like market day in Algeria.

Only here the crowds are reporters, cameramen, security policemen and television technicians, with all their attendant paraphernalia.

All that is missing is the chief commodity, hard news, since the hearings are in secret. Thus, if it is perhaps the most important Washington news story of the century, it is also perhaps the most difficult to cover.

Each word that filters out from the hearing room is picked over like fruit in a stall, squeezed and tested, until it is sent on its way to newspaper offices and television and radio stations around the world.

Nor is it likely to get much better when the hearings become open to the public, for how to cover the story then has already provoked bitter dispute within the press corps. That is because only about 100 seats have been allocated to the press, and more than 1,000 reporters want to get inside.

#### Change in Procedure

So far, including today, the committee has held six sessions, and all of them were closed. The second meeting, however, produced news leaks to The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Boston Globe. This, in turn, led to a system whereby the 38 committee members were no longer allowed to take their copies of the Watergate tape transcripts from the hearing room.

This stopped most of the leaks, but produced other problems for the press and the public, for with little hard news to report the news stories coming out of the hearings tended sometimes to be repetitious or information already known or speculative.

Each day the committee

holds a news briefing at the end of the hearing, but since the committee members are sworn to secrecy, relevant information is not always developed from the briefings.

In such an atmosphere, the committee or staff member who has an ax to grind is in a strong position, since he or she may leak information that is totally one sided, either in support of the impeachment or against it, and it may be widely reported.

To protect themselves on the story, the 70 or so reporters assigned to covering the committee practice pack journalism, descending on each Representative as he comes out of the hearing room and following him down the corridor in small crowds, the whole scene resembling a rugby football scrum.

Even this is not simple, since there are many doors leading from the hearing room, and the Congressmen, in the words of Bill Vance of the Knight Newspapers, "come out and spread like cockroaches."

Another problem is that many of the committee members, without their tape transcripts in front of them, do not remember, once out in the corridor, exactly what occurred inside the hearing room, so that often even those Congressmen who want to reveal some news get that news wrong.

#### Magnet to Reach Voters

The hearings are held in room 2141 of the Rayburn House Office Building. At the South Capital Street entrance to the building, the one nearest the hearing room, the television cameras are set up just inside the doorway. Yesterday, there were six television film cameras and 14 microphones waiting any committee member who wanted to be seen or heard.

Since the entire House is up for re-election this fall, this battery of electronic equipment is an irresistible magnet to the committee members, even though they have, at this stage, little, if anything, to say.

It is also in Room 2141 where the committee, despite pressure

from the press, will hold its public hearings. It is a small room, and it will set only about 100 reporters and perhaps 15 or 20 spectators from the general public, at the most.

The House Press Gallery has 1,200 newspaper reporter members, representing 590 daily newspapers.

Of the 100 seats provided for the press—a figure worked out between the committee and Ben West, superintendent of the House Press Gallery—72 are assigned to daily newspaper reporters, 18 to magazine reporters and weeklies and 10 to radio and television reporters. A section of the aside for radio and television technicians and producers and equipment, and additional electronic media reporters will be allowed there.

The daily newspapers believe that 72 seats are not enough. Of that number The Associated Press, United Press International and Reuters each receive two seats; and each daily paper, including the largest, receives only one seat.

The Associated Press and United Press International are primary news services, providing most of the news that appears in American newspapers and on radio and television stations; but newspapers such as The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Los Angeles Times also have news services that supply primary news to many newspapers, and each feels that it, too, must have at least two seats to meet its commitments to clients.

Still, Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr., Democrat of New Jersey who is the House Judiciary Committee chairman, refuses to move to a larger room. His administrative aide, Francis O'Brien, gives several reasons. One is that even Building is only 3 years old, he believes that Room 2141 is already historic, and he wants to continue its history.

He also says that the larger rooms available do not have nearby "support" rooms, such as space for lawyers, for typing and for making photographic copies.