

## A Rough Week for President Nixon

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## Washington

Despite its own public and private political quarrels, the House Judiciary Committee yesterday produced a cold, encyclopedic account of the Watergate scandal, devoid of passion; judgment, or even suggestion.

It is the case both for and against the impeachment of Richard M.

Nixon, 3891 pages of sworn testimony, transcripts of private presi-

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dential conversations, notes, telephone logs, newspaper clippings, and statements of fact in the dullest, driest conceivable phrases.

More than anything else, the documents will determine whether Mr. Nixon becomes the first President of the United States turned out of office by the Congress.

There is not much about the report to elevate spirits at the White House.

With all of the evidence pulled together, it pictures the coverup as a massive effort, launched almost immediately, and growing week by week in size and complexity.

At first it was a matter of keeping the lid on until after the November, 1972, election, and gradually it became a coverup of the coverup.

Amazingly, there appears little indication that anyone really thought of taking another course.

Even Mr. Nixon, after John W. Dean's "cancer on the Presidency" conversation on March 21, 1973, did not seem worried over the import of the matter.

The Judiciary Committee report included a transcript of the President's words spoken into a recorder at the end of the day:

"As far as the day was concerned," he began, "it was relatively uneventful, except for the, uh, talk with Dean. Dean really, in effect, let it all hang out when he said there was a cancerous growth around the Presidency that simply was going to

continue to grow and that we had probably to cut it out now rather than let it grow and destroy us later. He obviously is very depressed and doesn't really see anything — other course of action open but to, uh, move to let the, uh, facts out."

Besides bringing together the raw material behind the events that have made headlines since the Watergate burglary of June 17, 1972, the documents produce new pieces of evidence indicating that the President knew sooner than he claims that a massive conspiracy to obstruct justice was taking place around him.

Four days before the famous meeting with Dean, Mr. Nixon warned that the coverup could not be allowed to reach White House chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman, lest the President himself be caught up in it.

The new evidence, however, is only one reason that publication of the documents increased pressure on the White House.

Most recently, the main line of defense at the Executive Mansion has been to attack the committee, to berate its Democratic majority for "selective leaks," to accuse it of allowing prejudicial information to be spread out of context.

In releasing all the Watergate material it has compiled since its investigation began, the committee has put all evidence the White House has complained about into perspective.

Indeed, if fault can be found with the way the evidence has been presented, it is that the report treats inconsequential matters having nothing to do with the President the same way it handles key elements of the investigation.

Furthermore, though objections were noted, members of the committee allowed James D. St. Clair, the President's attorney, to include statements that clearly did not comply with the rule that no conclusions be drawn.

In its handling of the St. Clair statements and in its evenhanded presentation of the statements of fact, the

committee has made it most difficult for the White House to attack its fairness.

The report came at a time when Mr. Nixon is again under an avalanche of damaging developments.

This has been one of the worst weeks for the White House since the President fired Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox and the week following the release of the White House transcripts.

First of all, the Supreme Court heard arguments on the President's refusal to turn over 64 more tape recordings subpoenaed by Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski and the related issue

of the President's being named an unindicted co-conspirator in the Watergate coverup by a U.S. Grand Jury.

A decision by the court is expected within the next several days, and if the President loses, it will not come as a surprise to regular observers of the court.

On the heels of the court arguments came the Judiciary

Committee's release of its own transcripts of the White House tape recordings. The differences in the Judiciary Committee version and the White House version were significant enough that some committee sources consider it possible that omissions in the White House transcript could be cited a part of the Watergate coverup.

If these were not enough, the trial of John D. Ehrlichman, the President's former domestic affairs adviser, on charges growing out of the Ellsberg burglary continued through the week in U.S. District Court, and Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger was required to appear as a defense witness.

Then Wednesday, Senator Edward J. Gurney (Rep.-Fla.), Mr. Nixon's staunchest defender during the Senate Watergate hearings last summer, was indicted on charges of taking bribes from builders in exchange for favored treatment from federal housing officials and of lying to the grand jury which brought the charges.

And at about the same time, the Senate Watergate

Committee issued a staff report accusing the President's close friend, Charles G. (Bebe) Rebozo, of using secret trust accounts, apparently including \$23,500 in campaign funds, to make improvements on the President's Key Biscayne property.

The committee staff also said Rebozo spent \$4562 in surplus campaign funds from 1968, to buy diamond earrings, which the President gave Mrs. Nixon as a birthday present.

Then yesterday, just hours before the Judiciary Committee's report was made public, another gap in a White House tape recording was disclosed.

The March 20, 1973, tape, subpoenaed by the Judiciary Committee, included a conversation between the President and Ehrlichman.

And there is more to come. The Judiciary Committee in the next few days will be releasing its evidence on Mr. Nixon and the ITT affair, political use of the Internal Revenue Service, domestic intelligence

operations, the impoundment of congressionally appropriated funds, and the secret bombing of Cambodia. It will also issue a document on the President's personal taxes.

As the Watergate bombs fell all around, the White House press office stayed on its usual course.

Mr. Nixon has portrayed as a man very much occupied with the affairs of state, leaving the irritations outside to his expert legal help.

Having been diverted for a time by Mr. Nixon's travels to the Middle East and to Moscow, Washington's attention, however, riveted back on impeachment and the approaching vote by the Judiciary Committee.

The President, meanwhile, departs Washington today for 10 to 15 days at his San Clemente estate.