

Rodino Unit: Its Makeup Is Atypical

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The 38 men and women on the House Judiciary Committee who now sit in judgment on the President of the United States are, like their colleagues in Congress, highly individual bundles of conscience, political cunning, anxiety and ambition.

The committee is not, however, a perfect cross-section of the House or the country—and the peculiarities of this group are important in the first stage of the impeachment process.

Women, blacks and urban liberals are over-represented among the 21 Democrats, compared to their proportions among the 248 Democrats in the House. Southerners, conservatives and rural constituencies are under-represented.

On the Republican side, just the opposite is the case. The 17 minority members are weighted to the South, Midwest and West—and to the conservative side of the spectrum.

A member's general philosophical or political position is not necessarily a guide to his vote on impeachment—as Rep. Lawrence J. Hogan (R-Md.) demonstrated Tuesday. Hogan, one of the four former FBI agents on the panel, an ardent crusader against abortion and for conservative causes, and a staunch Nixon supporter throughout his career, came out hard for impeachment.

But Judiciary Committee's basic polarization between liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans is the reason so much emphasis has focused on the handful of conservative Democrats and moderate Republicans on the committee.

It is such men as Walter Flowers (D-Ala.), James R. Mann (D-S.C.) and Ray Thornton (D-Ark.) who will decide how solid the Democrats are for impeachment.

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And it is such men as Robert McClory (R-Ill.), Henry P. Smith III (R-N.Y.), Tom Railsback (R-Ill.), Hamilton Fish Jr. (R-N.Y.), M. Caldwell Butler (R-Va.) and William S. Cohen (R-Maine) who will determine whether Republicans rally with any strength around the President.

There are two other notable characteristics of the Judiciary members that could affect their votes.

Few of them are vulnerable to short-term political retaliation in 1974. And most of them are young enough and junior enough to be thinking of long-term careers.

Only two members are retiring voluntarily from politics this year. Smith, the 62-year-old New York Republican, has indicated he would welcome an appointment to the United Nations. Rep. Harold D. Donohue (D-Mass.), a bachelor at 73, is looking forward to retirement in Worcester.

Hogan is running for governor of Maryland and hoping to fare better than Rep. Jerome R. Waldie (D-Calif.), also a committee member and one of the early impeachment advocates, who was knocked out of the California governorship race in last month's primary.

Rep. Wayne Owens (D-Utah) is a candidate for the Senate, and his political problem is almost a mirror image of Hogan's.

Hogan has to figure out how to win in a state with a 3-to-1 Democratic registration edge. Owens, who is also expected to support impeachment, has to sell his stand in a state where Mr. Nixon has always enjoyed strong support.

The other committee members are all running for re-election and face only the immediate challenge of explaining their position to constituents who have supported them in the past—a relatively easier task.

On most scorecards, fewer than a half-dozen of the members of Judiciary look to be dangerously vulnerable to defeat this year—no matter which way they vote.

Reps. Robert F. Drinan (D-Mass.), the Jesuit priest who was the first impeachment advocate in Congress, and Rep. Edward Mezvinsky (D-Iowa), a freshman critic of the President, both had very close races in 1972, but neither is likely to be damaged by an impeachment vote.

On the Republican side, the four most vulnerable members are the two New Jersey congressmen, Charles W. Sandman Jr., and Joseph J. Maraziti, both weakened by redistricting, Rep. Harold V. Froehlich (R-Wis.) and Rep. Wiley Mayne (R-Iowa), both of whom barely won in 1972 with help from Mr. Nixon's coattails.

Of those four, only Froehlich is considered a possible impeachment vote. Another statistically marginal Republican, Rep. Cohen of Maine, is regarded as a likely impeachment vote, but Cohen has solidified himself in his district enough in the past two years to face no imminent danger.

Even without the immediate pressure of possible election defeat, however, Judiciary

Committee members involved in a political-judicial process like impeachment are certain to reflect the political character of their districts.

Thus, the predictably heavy support among committee Democrats is a direct byproduct of the fact that their ranks include three of the 16 blacks in the House (Reps. John Conyers Jr., of Detroit, Charles B. Rangel

of Harlem and Barbara Jordan of Houston), plus another half-dozen, including chairman Peter W. Rodino Jr., (D-N.J.), whose big-city districts include substantial minority populations.

It is also a byproduct of the fact that the Judiciary Committee through the years had been a favorite place for service by lawyers interested in liberal causes, like Rep. Don Edwards (D-Calif.), a former national chairman of Americans for Democratic Action, and Rep. Robert W. Kastenmeier (D-Wis.), who represents Madison and the University of Wisconsin.

On the other hand, most of the Republicans on the committee—from the ranking minority member, Rep. Edward Hutchinson of Michigan, to Rep. Delbert L. Latta of Ohio, at the bottom of the table—come from the kind of rural and small town districts that represent bedrock conservative Republicanism.

Rep. Charles E. Wiggins (R-Calif.), who has emerged

as the President's chief defender, is, appropriately, the congressman from the same Whittier, Calif., district that sent Richard Nixon to the House a quarter-century ago.

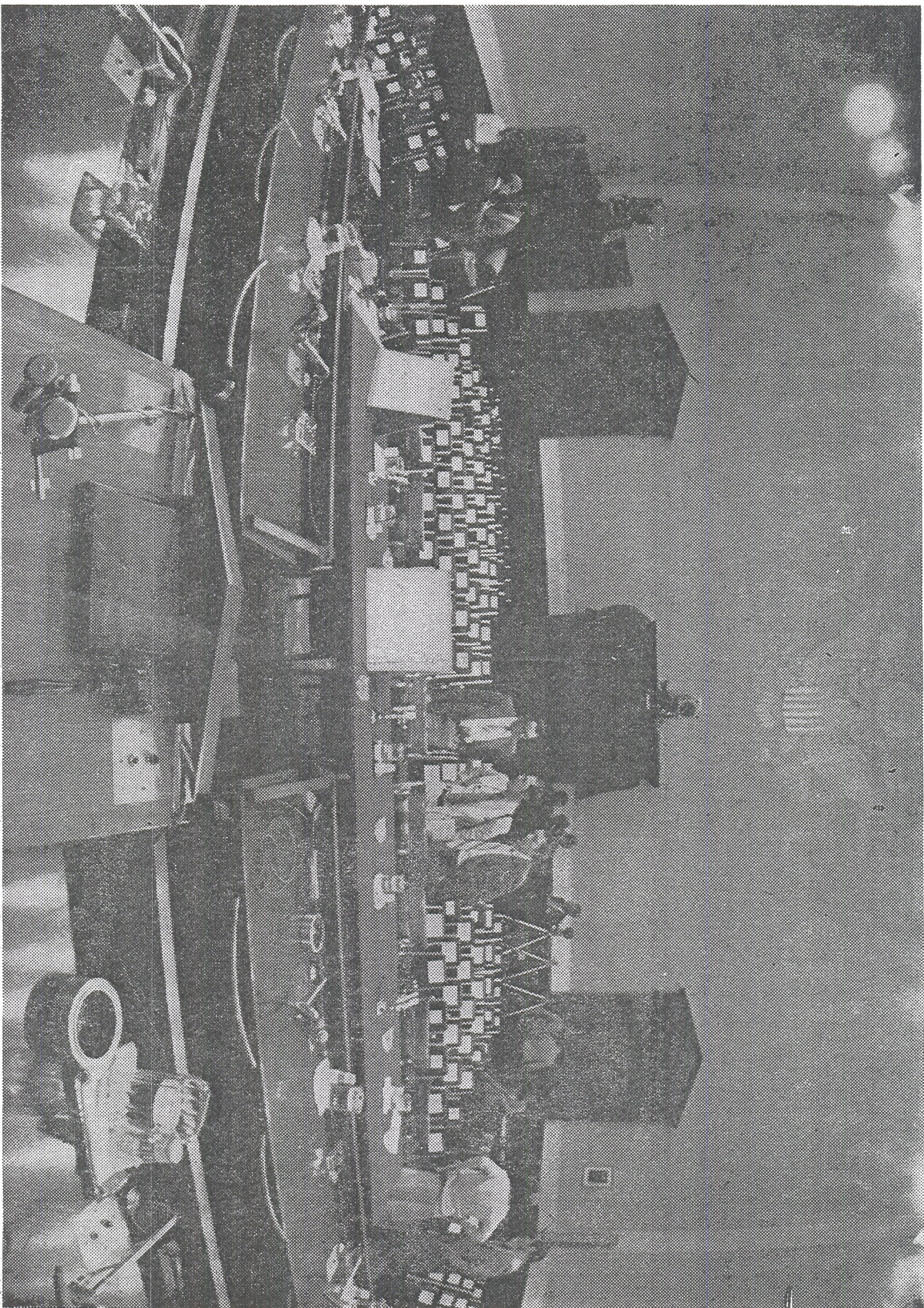
The polarization of the committee is indicated, in another way, by the fact that virtually all its Democrats were financed in 1972 with the help of organized labor, while most of the Republicans drew campaign assistance from business and medical political funds.

In his 1972 sweep, Mr. Nixon carried 29 of the 38 districts represented by Judiciary Committee members. But these members—and particularly the Republicans—show few signs of looking back to that election for their guidance.

The striking characteristic of the committee is the briefness of many of its members' tenure. Only seven of the 17 Republicans and nine of the 21 Democrats were in Congress before Mr. Nixon entered the White House.

Most of them, plainly, hope to be around long after he is gone.

Railsback, the Illinois moderate who has emerged as the key figure among the uncommitted GOP members, reflected that when he said yesterday, "My feeling is that the future of the (Republican) Party is not in the White House. President Nixon may have some influence on the 1976 convention,



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Judiciary Committee Chairman Rodino's view of his television-ready hearing room where debate on impeaching the President is held.

but after that . . . there have to be new people.”

“Some people think that if a Larry Hogan or a Bill Cohen votes for impeachment,

it's the death knell for them in the party,” Rallsback said. “I don't believe that. The threat of retaliation won't work.”

Rallsback said that in his own western Illinois district, “my people are against impeachment by a rather large margin.” But he noted that

“almost all the pressure to vote against impeachment is coming from the senior regular party officials . . . I find an entirely different feeling

on the part of the younger people.”

“We owe the old-timers a lot,” Rallsback said, “but they are not the future.”