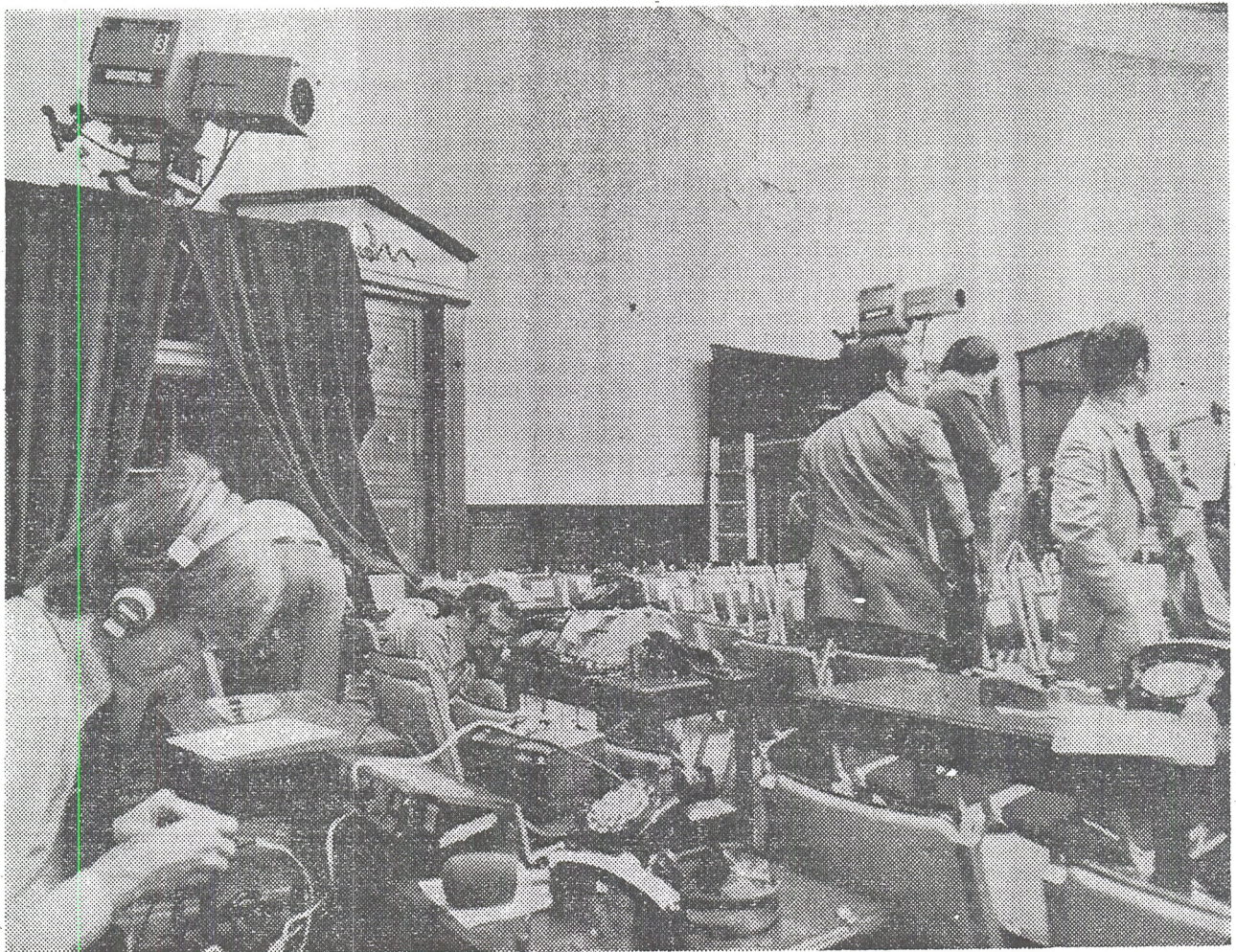


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Technicians preparing equipment yesterday for the presentation of debate on the impeachment of President Nixon on television and radio. The House and its Judiciary Committee had voted to have the proceedings broadcast.

The Panel's 'Wild' Day: Negotiating on Swing Votes

By R. W. APPLE JR.

WASHINGTON, July 24—The klieg lights were blazing behind the great, star-studded doors of Room 2141 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The 150-odd spectator seats were filled, the 38 exhausted members of the House Judiciary Committee were in their places and everyone—from the youngest page to the most grizzled and cynical of the politicians and reporters — knew that this was a very special night, one of those rare moments that really deserved to be called historic and momentous.

But at the same time, at the very instant when the second Presidential impeachment investigation in the history of the Republic reached its decisive stage, there was at least a whiff of anticlimax in the atmosphere.

Most of the issues had already been decided — in already been decided — in the laborious preparation of testimony, in the drafting and redrafting of impeachment articles, in the pressures and counterpressures of constituents and peers and lobbyists, in the endless caucuses of majority and minority members.

Now the press and, by means of television and radio, the public were being asked into the hearing room to watch a last act in the committee's deliberations. What drama remained lay in the fact that it was also a first act, to be followed by the deliberations of the House of Representatives

and then (unless the politicians were guessing wrong) the Senate.

'A Chance to Explain'

There may have been one or two minds among the 38 members that remained genuinely open as the chairman's gavel fell tonight. But nearly everyone, one anti-impeachment member suggested, saw the televised hearings "as a chance to explain himself to his constituents, not to make up his mind."

When Representative Lawrence J. Hogan, Republican of Maryland, announced yesterday that he would vote for impeachment, he remarked that "by tomorrow, every person on the committee will have made up his mind." No one followed Mr. Hogan's lead today and made a formal announcement, but the committee-watchers and the politicians kept count all day anyway.

12 Votes

The day began with 18 Democrats and one Republican "committed" to impeachment and seven Republicans "opposed." That left 12 votes to be accounted for.

People didn't play the game by counting votes against impeachment; they counted votes for, which said something about the mood in the corridors. The surest clue, it seemed, was to try to learn who was meeting whom.

All day four Republicans

leaning toward impeachment and three Democrats thought to be doing likewise were huddled in the office of Representative Tom Railsback of Illinois. What impeachment language could all seven accept?

Elsewhere (the venue was a secret), an ad hoc drafting committee of pro-impeachment Democrats was stripping pejorative adjectives from the original draft impeachment articles, trying to get down to broadly acceptable language.

"It has been an absolutely wild day," said one draftsman, Representative Don Edwards, Democrat of California.

Accord Reported

The phone calls flew back and forth between the two groups — we need at least this much, we can't take more than this and stay together — until the ubiquitous informed sources said that the seven were ready to go along.

Thus, the counters put down Representatives Railsback, M. Caldwell Butler of Virginia, William S. Cohen of Maine and Hamilton Fish of New York — all Republicans — and three Southern Democrats — James R. Mann of South Carolina, Walter Flowers of Alabama and Ray Thorton of Arkansas.

And then there were five — all Republicans.

Representatives David W. Dennis of Indiana, Wiley Mayne of Iowa, Harold V.

Froelich of Wisconsin and Robert McClory of Illinois, all of whom fear for their re-election, and Henry R. Smith 3d of upstate New York, who doesn't, because he is retiring at year's end.

It was said in the Speaker's Lobby, a long, narrow room lined with portraits of past potentates of the House, that Mr. McClory might swing some of the other fr. He himself wasn't saying much to reporters, but he told an elevator operator that his intentions would be clear after he spoke his piece tonight.

True to his word, Mr. McClory seemed to signal an intention to oppose President Nixon when he said the only way to enhance the two-party system was to "reject . . . the flouting of our laws" by a President of either party.

Things may have been tense for Mr. McClory, but obviously they weren't for two California Democrats on the committee, George E. Danielson and Jerome R. Waldie.

Mr. Walie and Mr. Danielson, late this afternoon, were lounging in the Speaker's Lobby, chuckling over the day's episode of the comic strip, "Doonesbury."

Earlier in the day, Representative Charles F. Wiggins, Republican of California, who is President Nixon's most articulate defender on the committee, held one of his almost daily seminars for a group of reporters.