



The Battle Inside The GOP Party

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THE MORNING AFTER his slashing attack on the impeachment inquiry by the Judiciary Committee, the New Jersey Republican, Charles Sandman, rode on the subway with Lud Ashley, a Democratic congressman from Toledo. "Pretty rough stuff," Ashley murmured. Sandman shrugged, and said: "I was only trying to win over a couple of votes on our side."

That comment expresses exactly what the struggle inside the Judiciary Committee has been all about. The fight has been between Republicans, and at issue is the future of the party. Judging by the relatively wary reaction of Vice President Gerald Ford and House minority Leader John Rhodes, the Nixon wing of the party is not winning.

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REPUBLICAN congressmen who have voted for impeachment in the Judiciary Committee have been advancing precisely those arguments. Thus Tom Railsback, the congressman from Illinois who led the Republicans for impeachment in the committee, underlined the difference between the President and the party at a breakfast here the other day.

"The future of the Republican Party," he said, "doesn't lie with President Nixon. The future belongs to Republicans in the Senate, the House, and the state legislatures."

Caldwell Butler, the Virginia Republican, said in his opening statement:

"Watergate is our shame. These things

happened in the Republican administration while we had a Republican in the White House and every single person convicted to date has one way or the other owed allegiance to the Republican party . . . it is we, not the Democrats, who must demonstrate that we are capable of enforcing the high standards we would set for them."

To bar the way to that seductive argument, the President has only one weapon. It is the weapon of fear — the threat that any Republican who deserts in this hour of need will be impaled on the glittering blade of retaliation.

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IN THAT VEIN, hard-core Nixon supporters around the country have been mobilized. They are deluging Republican members of the Congress with mail and telegrams threatening to take vengeance at the polls against Republicans who abandon the President.

Inside the Judiciary Committee, the Nixon loyalists have also been brandishing the threat of retaliation. The President's hardcore supporters have centered their charge on the argument that the articles of impeachment lack specificity and a direct link to the President himself.

That is a way of telling other Republicans they will have to vote on a vague indictment, thus exposing themselves to punishment from Republican voters who need chapter and verse to be convinced of the President's culpability.