

Among the more preposterous ideas issuing from President Nixon's White House to "contain" the political damage from Watergate is the suggestion that Mr. Nixon might simply ask the House of Representatives for a perfunctory and pro forma vote for impeachment, without debate, to speed up the process and leave the real deliberation to the subsequent Senate trial.\*

This extra-constitutional ploy was first raised some time ago by a few uneasy Republican Representatives, eager to find some way of ducking an impeachment decision that they thought would only bring them grief—whichever way they voted—in the November election.

As it is turning out, the political backlash from a vote for impeachment may not be as severe as once feared. In any event, the original sponsors of this cop-out have wisely backed off, leaving Presidential consultant Patrick J. Buchanan\* about the only man around who thinks it's worth considering—perhaps for him, it is a way of discounting a heavy impeachment vote in advance.

Nothing could be clearer than the Constitution's assignment of the power to impeach solely to the House of Representatives; no "magnanimous" Presidential decree could change that body's obligation to continue moving with full deliberation and responsibility for its actions.

\*SEE HERBERS, 2 AUG

## ...And Bug-Out

So now it seems there is another mysterious gap in those Presidential tape recordings. This one lasts five minutes and twelve seconds during a meeting of April 17, 1973, just as Mr. Nixon and his closest aides were deciding how to tell the American public why "intensive new inquiries" were being made in the Watergate case.

Reels of tape do run out, of course, as Presidential lawyer James D. St. Clair explained in this instance. The odd part of it is that President Nixon himself reviewed and edited the "full" transcript of this meeting for publication last April—giving no indication that there was any break in the dialogue. And just two days ago, Mr. St. Clair told Judge Sirica that he was not aware of any gaps or anomalies in any of the tapes submitted under court order.

It is, as one of the House Judiciary Committee members observed the other day, a strange way to run a White House.