

House Freezes as a Message From Nixon Is

By RICHARD D. LYONS

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 7—At 12:08 P.M. today, after the House of Representatives had opened with a prayer, a courier arrived from the White House and was ushered onto the floor by William M. (Fishbait) Miller, who bowed to Speaker Carl Albert and announced sonorously:

"Mr. Speaker, a message from the President of the United States."

Garrulous Congressmen who had been chatting and sifting the latest resignation rumors suddenly froze.

The suspense was dispelled when a clerk announced that the message was a report titled "Government Services to Rural America."

The speculation continued as Senators and Representatives gathered for private meetings in the maze of offices throughout the old Capitol.

The legislator in the thick of the decision-making was Senator Hugh Scott of Penn-

sylvania, the Senate Republican leader.

Senator Scott was seen striding briskly across the floor of the great rotunda, turning into a hallway and bursting into Room H 234, then shouting to an aide: "Close that door!"

A crowd, convinced that this was the meeting of the Congressional leadership that would set the terms of a resignation gathered at the door.

Tossed Away

Five minutes later Senator Scott emerged. "There may be something later," he said while retracing his steps across the Great Rotunda and trying to evade several dozen newsmen. The Senator actually became the spearhead of a column that sliced through lines of tourists.

Anxious to find out who else was attending the meeting in H 234, the curious returned only to discover that it is the Capitol prayer room.

A secretary with a determined look walked into the House press gallery

carrying a stack of papers containing an official announcement.

The document was addressed to "members, Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico, Delegates From the District of Columbia, Guam, and the Virgin Islands, and All Legislative Employees." The readers read breathlessly, then tossed the paper away in disgust.

Resignation? No. Impeachment? No. It was just Representative John C. Kluczynski, Democrat of Illinois and chairman of the Select Committee on the House Restaurant, announcing that by phoning 225-3699 a caller could hear a message providing the daily luncheon menu.

The resignation rumors were mixed with grumbles in the House Dining Room over the quality of the four "chef's suggestions" of the day: roast beef, barbecued spareribs, fruit salad and something described as "poached egg on English muffin, topped with cheese sauce."

"It's finally come to that," sighed one diner, "egg McMuffins this week, Big Macs next week."

About 5 P.M. the rumors hit their peak and the telephones in the rest rooms in the Capitol were ringing constantly as Congressional aides, and even some Representatives, asked if the President had resigned.

"The rumors usually get started on the first floor over there," said one Congressional aide, pointing toward the House Office Buildings across Independence Avenue. "Then the rumors float upward floor by floor, and by the time they get to the top of the building the people start calling us."

Representative Gerry E. Studds, a liberal Democrat from Massachusetts, chose the day to announce his position on impeachment. To no one's surprise, he said he would vote for impeachment. The problem was that many of the press releases his staff distributed were blank.

Delivered

Late in the afternoon Representative John B. Anderson of Illinois, chairman of the House Republican Conference, emerged from the office of the House Minority leader, John J. Rhodes of Arizona.

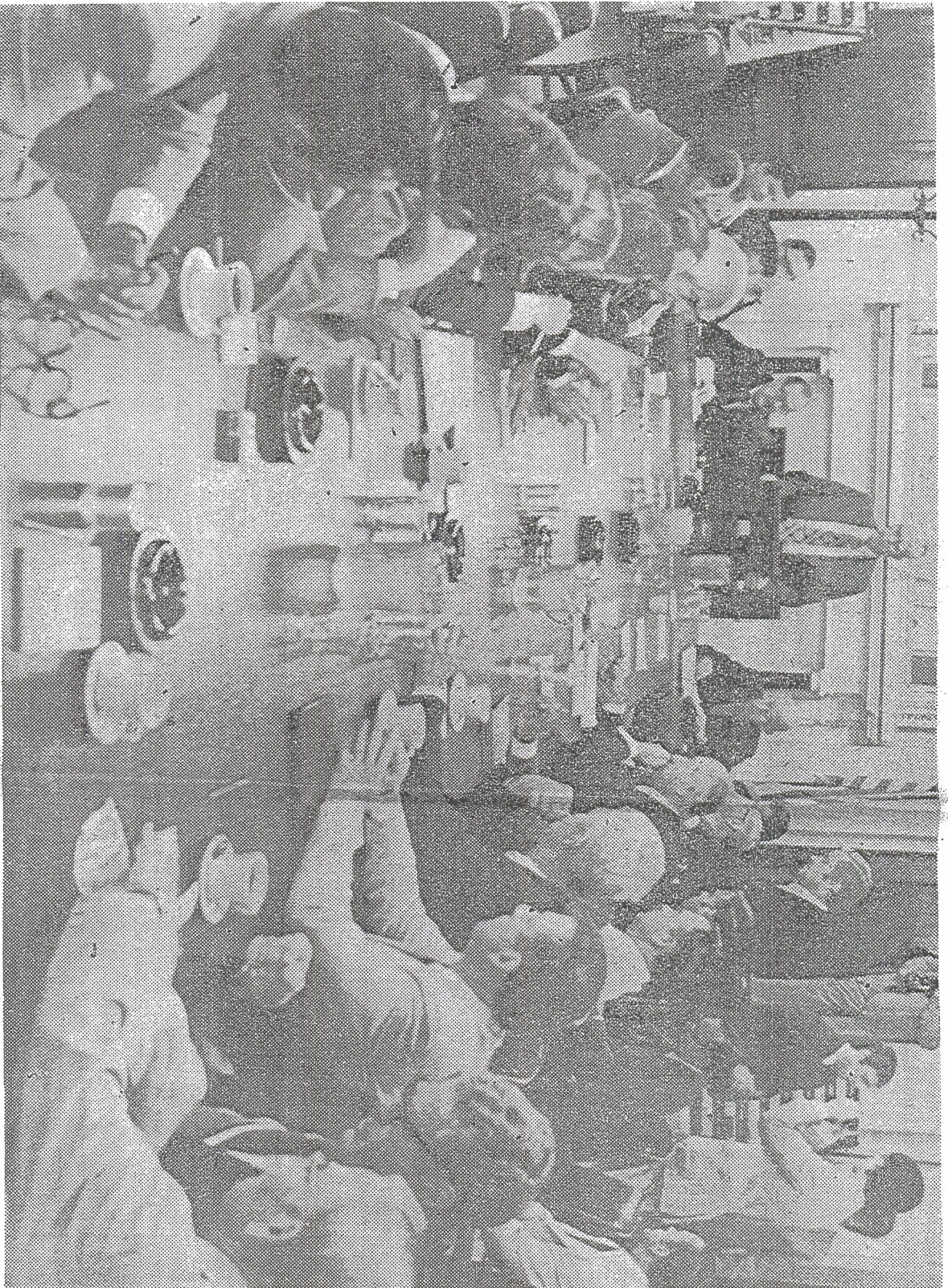
Mr. Anderson was quickly surrounded and asked the nature of the meeting.

"We were talking about the budget," Mr. Anderson said. Some in his audience smiled wryly.

Noting the reaction, the Congressman said: "Really, we were talking about the budget." The smiles persisted. Then Mr. Anderson became slightly annoyed, stating: "We talked about the budget, we really did. That was the purpose of the meeting and that's what we did."

But his words fell on deaf ears. How could anybody be talking about the business of running the Government, reasoned his listeners, when surely there was nothing else to talk about this day but resignation?

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Republican Senators meeting yesterday morning with Norris Cotton, standing, at head of table, as chairman. Impeachment was one of topics.

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