

The Historic Record...

The report and supporting documents of the House Judiciary Committee, now almost ready for presentation to the House of Representatives, constitute a statement of fundamental historic significance. They establish the incontrovertible fact that former President Richard M. Nixon would have been impeached and convicted under the Constitution of the United States had he not chosen to forestall the procedure by resigning his great office.

It is the evident intention of the Congressional leadership to have the House receive the report and enter it on the record as a definitive statement without pursuing further the process of impeachment to its inevitable climax. The purpose is to avoid any possibility of the development now of a partisan divisiveness which has been remarkably absent as the massive weight of evidence against the President accumulated with overwhelming force before his forced departure.

Since Mr. Nixon's resignation cut short the constitutional process that was so fairly under way, it is imperative both for the record of the present and for the historians of the future that the facts be nailed down in irrevocable form. The pending report does that, leading to the inescapable conclusion that this President has indeed committed impeachable offenses under the Constitution of the United States.

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The constitutional process of Presidential impeachment is a grave and majestic act of government, one that puts Congress and the Constitution to their severest test. Let future historians note that in the case of Richard M. Nixon—unlike that of Andrew Johnson a century earlier—the solemnity and dignity of the procedure were indisputably understood and recognized by the appropriate officers of the legislative branch, who conducted themselves accordingly.

Let future historians note that after long and agonizing preparation, the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives was presented by bipartisan counsel with a carefully detailed case culminating in the three articles of impeachment voted by a bipartisan majority of the committee. These legislators, almost without exception, demonstrated in their speech, their demeanor and their votes an anguished determination to act not as partisan politicians but as profoundly responsible citizens.

In the end new disclosures by Mr. Nixon himself of direct complicity proved conclusively—even to his staunchest defenders—that he had indeed engaged in the very practices of obstruction of justice and abuse of power with which he had already been charged by the majority. Only at this point, when the last of his devoted political allies were turning away from him and stating that there was now no chance that he could fail to be impeached by the House and convicted by the Senate, was Mr. Nixon finally persuaded to resign.