

House Votes 412-3 To Accept Report On Impeachment

By Richard L. Lyons
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The House Judiciary Committee ended its historic impeachment inquiry of Richard M. Nixon yesterday by the simple act of filing a report which the House accepted as part of its official record.

Committee Chairman Peter W. Rodino Jr. (D-N.J.) stood on the House floor and said: "Mr. Speaker, I sub-

mit a privileged report pursuant to House Resolution 803." That resolution, adopted 410 to 4 on Feb. 6, officially directed the committee to investigate and report on whether President Nixon should be impeached and removed from office.

Yesterday, the House voted 412 to 3 to accept the report, print it in the Congressional Record and to commend the committee for its "conscientious and capable" inquiry.

The word "accept" rather than "approve" was carefully chosen in order to place the official stamp of the House on the committee's work without stirring a last bitter debate that might have developed had it appeared the Judiciary Committee was seeking a vote on impeachment.

The three "No" votes were cast by the former President's last-ditch supporters, Reps. Earl F. Landgrebe (R-Ind.), Otto Passman (D-La.) and G. V. (Sonny) Montgomery (D-Miss.). In the three days between Mr. Nixon's admission Aug. 5 of his involvement in the Watergate cover-up from the start and his resignation Aug. 9, Landgrebe and Passman were the only House members who stated they would still vote against impeachment.

The complete report, which may total 300 or 400 pages when printed, will become the historical document explaining for posterity why Mr. Nixon became the first President in the nation's history to resign.

The committee report was accepted without a single word of explanation or debate. Rep. Robert E. Bauman (R-Md.) complained of being forced to "vote blindly" on a report no member had seen except those on the Judiciary Committee. Majority Leader Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill of Massachusetts repented that

no member had asked for time to speak.

The majority report totaled nearly 200 pages when circulated among members in draft form last week. It will be followed by minority views by

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the 10 Republicans who originally voted against all three articles of impeachment and by individual views of members who wish to emphasize or dissent from some section of the report.

The majority report, written by the staff of special counsel John Doar, is a narrative of events and evidence involving Mr. Nixon in obstruction of justice in the Watergate cover-up, misuse of federal agencies to violate rights of citizens, and defiance of eight committee subpoenas for 147 taped presidential conversation.

The committee adopted the obstruction of justice article by a vote of 27 to 11, the misuse of power article, 28 to 10, and the article on defiance of Congress, 21 to 17. But a week later, after Mr. Nixon released tapes of June 23, 1972, conversations which showed he was involved in the cover-up six days after the Watergate break-in and nine months earlier than he previously had insisted he was aware of it, all 38 committee members said they would vote for the obstruction of justice article.

The draft report circulated last week said Mr. Nixon's belated release of the new tapes on Aug. 5 "confirm the evidence that from the beginning the President knowingly directed the cover-up of the Watergate burglary."

The draft report also stated

that the concealment directed by Mr. Nixon "required perjury, destruction of evidence, obstruction of justice—all of which are crimes. It includes false and misleading statements as part of a deliberate, continued deception of the American people."

The draft report detailed the wiretaps of government officials begun in 1969, Mr. Nixon's first year in office, creation of the leak-plugging "plumbers" unit that led to the 1971 break-in of the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, and payments of hush money to Watergate defendants which then-White House counsel John W. Dean III discussed with Mr. Nixon on March 21, 1973. This was the date which Mr. Nixon insisted until Aug. 5 was the first time he learned of the cover-up.

Doar's draft, which with little change became the official report, also stated that misuse of agencies, such as attempts to use the Internal Revenue Service to harass political enemies "was carried out by President Nixon acting personally . . . for his political benefit."

The draft also said that if Mr. Nixon's defiance of committee subpoenas was not considered an impeachable offense, then any future President could resist impeachment

by refusing to turn over information.

The staff draft of minority views made it clear that Mr. Nixon had committed the impeachable offense of obstruction of justice in the Watergate cover-up, and that he had not been "hounded" from office by his enemies but was forced to resign by his own confession of guilt.

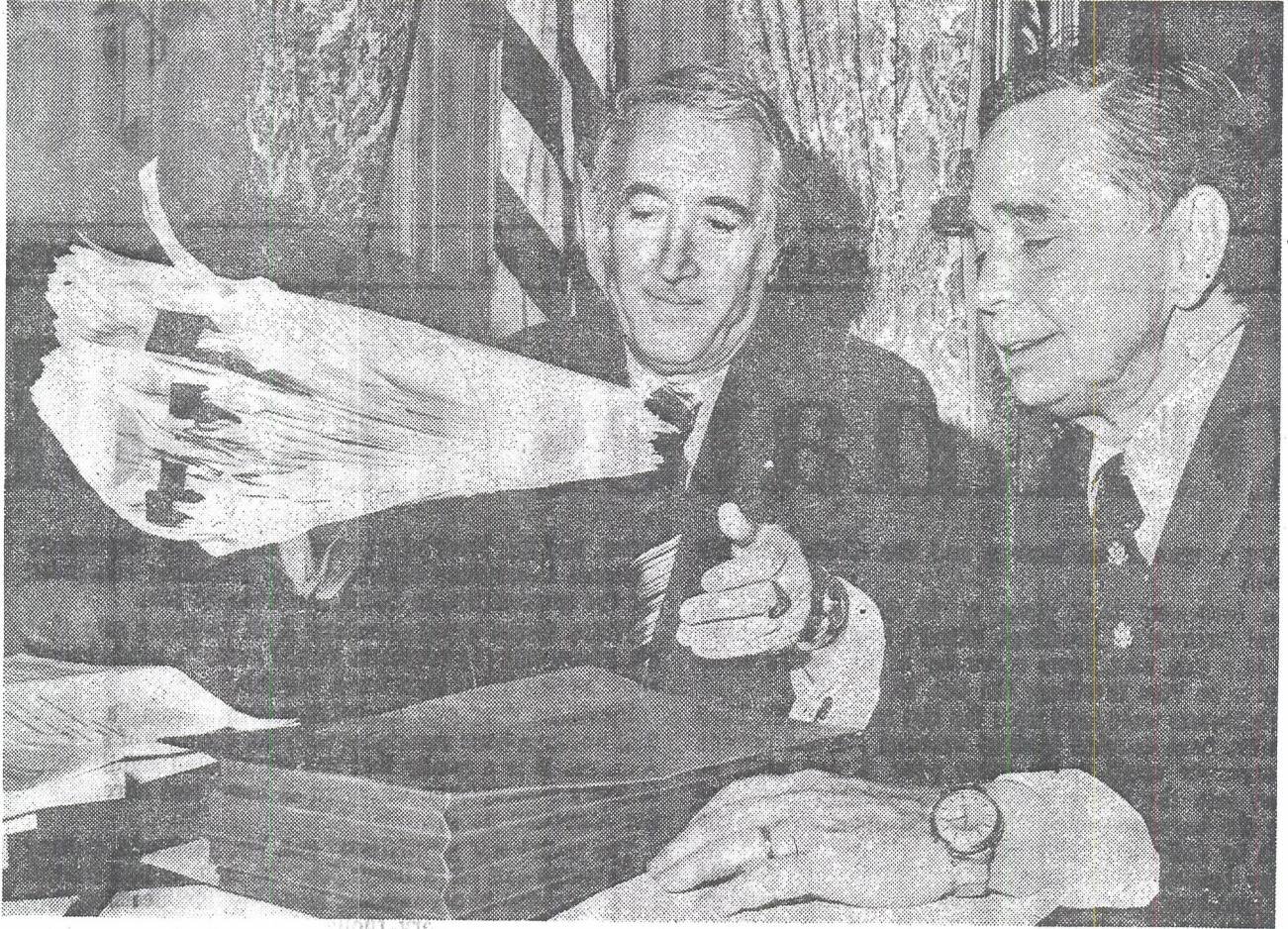
When Mr. Nixon resigned, there was some sentiment in Congress both for granting the former President immunity from prosecution and for pressing ahead with impeachment proceedings to provide a judgment through Senate trial of his guilt or innocence.

Both proposals have disappeared. Whether Mr. Nixon will face criminal action ap-

parently will be left to Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski. There was considerable doubt that Congress had the constitutional power to legislate immunity even if had chosen to do so, and support for a congressional statement of hope that the former President be left alone disappeared when Mr. Nixon refused to accept guilt in his resignation speech.

Rodino and all House leaders opposed pushing forward with official impeachment proceedings on grounds that, as Rodino said yesterday, "the process has been served" by Mr. Nixon's resignation.

"I feel tremendously relieved" said Rodino, after he filed the report. "The country can get moving again."



By James K. W. Atherton—The Washington Post

Judiciary Committee Chairman Rodino hands committee report on impeachment to House Speaker Carl Albert.

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