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Witness Woodrow Wilson

To the Editor:

Recent accounts of President Ford's decision to testify before the House Judiciary Subcommittee have recalled similar engagements of Presidents Washington and Lincoln with Congressional committees. It is curious that in the search for precedents no reference has been made to President Wilson's appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Aug. 19, 1919.

In the course of its hearings on the Versailles Treaty, the committee requested the President's testimony on the league and the treaty. Wilson responded by inviting the full membership of the committee to the East Room of the White House. There he permitted himself to be "grilled" for three and a half hours in the presence of reporters. After the session, committee members and the President lunched together in the White House. The accessibility of the President in no way altered the outcome of the committee's hearings. The treaty was later reported to the Senate with reservations and failed to receive the necessary two-thirds majority in that body.

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