

Capitol Views

Word for Douglas Case—Delay

BY WILLARD EDWARDS

WASHINGTON, July 3—The votes are available, in the opinion of Capitol Hill head-counters, to impeach Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas. For that very reason, legislative



Edwards

veterans agree, the possibility of a vote before Election Day, Nov. 3, has almost vanished.

An impeachment resolution, entrusted last April to a special five-man House judiciary subcommittee, is quietly being smothered thru de-

laying tactics which mock the initial promise of action within 60 days.

The deadline for a report has now been postponed until late August, at a time when the House will be anxious to adjourn for the fall campaigning. The pressures will be heavy to put off a record vote until Congress returns next January.

Such pressures will come mainly from pro-Douglas liberals who have informed leaders that they cannot take the political risk of voting in support of Douglas.

They have pleaded for escape from a record vote. Their cries are being heeded.

Chairman Emanuel Celler [D., N. Y.] and Rep. William M. McCulloch [R., Ohio] head the special subcommittee, which is loaded, 4 to 1, for clearing Douglas of charges of misbehavior. They promised "neither witch-hunt nor white-wash" when given the impeachment resolution.

The subcommittee's only product thus far has been a 53-page staff study, stamped "Confidential." It is so secret that it has not been leaked to the press. Even the Republican minority leader, Gerald R. Ford [Mich.], who first raised the impeachment issue, had great difficulty in securing a copy.

THE REASON for this extraordinary secrecy became apparent when the document's contents were studied. It appears to be largely the handiwork of Douglas' attorney, former Federal Judge Simon Rifkind, and includes a slashing attack on the "McCarthyite" tactics of those who have impugned Douglas' integrity thru "guilt by association" with unsavory characters.

Rifkind, however, does not scorn to argue "innocence by association," noting that his client enjoyed the confidence of great men like the late Adlai E. Stevenson and John F. Kennedy.

Rifkind supplied a detailed defense to the charges against Douglas, which include practicing law for private benefit while on the bench; writing for erotic magazines; espousing revolution; and profitable connections with a foundation funded from Las Vegas gambling casinos.

HE REPORTEDLY has been aided by a "board of strategy" consisting of two former Supreme Court justices [Arthur Goldberg, now seeking to be governor of New York, and Abe Fortas, who resigned under fire] and a former defense secretary [Clark Clifford].

In asking and obtaining the 60-day postponement on June 24, the staff noted that a huge mass of documents from government agencies must be examined before "final assessment of the validity of the charges." Such a "final assessment," critics note, is not the subcommittee's assignment. That verdict is reserved to the Senate, which sits as a trial court if the House finds probable cause for such a proceeding in the public interest.

For those interested in a scholarly, unbiased and fascinating paperback summary of this controversial case, "Dossier on Douglas," by Allan C. Brownfeld [New Majority Book Club, 1835 K St., N.W., Washington, D. C.], costing \$3, is recommended. The private and public lives of William O. Douglas provide the ingredients for a remarkable tale.