



An Impeachment Job Going Begging

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AS THE CONGRESS advances gingerly towards an impeachment proceeding, it is increasingly apparent that a job is going searching for a man.

That job is going begging because the men managing the impeachment proceeding have deliberately avoided any suggestion of acting as prosecutors.

The managers of the impeachment are Peter Rodino, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, and John Doar, his chief counsel for Watergate affairs. Rodino is having his brush with history. He wants to avoid the slightest hint of partisanship and be fairness itself.

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DOAR reinforces the chairman's personal bent. He is what some people call a man of the highest rectitude and what others call a bit of a Christer. He was a successful civil rights lawyer 15 years ago because he followed the rules of the game. His idea of the inquiry is that the facts should speak for themselves.

Maybe the facts will speak for themselves. After hearing the White House tapes, the Watergate special prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, has repeatedly expressed the view that he has found nothing which suggests that former White House aide John Dean was lying when he testified that the President participated in the Watergate cover-up. That suggests there is cold fingerprint-type evidence in the tapes. Doar ought to get those tapes in a hurry.

But there is reason to doubt that even the tapes will yield the facts after the fashion of a Perry Mason drama. Mr. Nix-

on's style has always been to let others do his dirty work.

A particularly nice example of that style emerges in a recent book by Arnold Weber, a former high official who managed the first stage of the wage-and-price freeze for Mr. Nixon. Weber says that at one point the President expressed doubt as to whether the freeze should apply to football players. When Weber said that it had to as a matter of equity, the President commented: "I guess you're right. But whatever you decide, leave me out of it."

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THE "leave me out of it" approach explains why in case after case — in the case of the 18 minutes missing from one tape, in the case of the Watergate break-in, in the case of the hush money paid for the Watergate cover-up, in the case of the burglary of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, in the case of the falsely dated deed conveying Mr. Nixon's papers to the National Archives — the trail of evidence leads to the immediate circle of the President and then goes dead.

Given this pattern, the probability is that the facts won't speak for themselves. In these circumstances it seems clear that there ought to be another figure in the management of the impeachment.

There ought to be a prosecutor — somebody who is constantly laying out the big picture, drawing the inferences, summing up the circumstantial evidence, and asserting against the logic of mere procedural virtuousness the larger case for finding out what, in substance, actually happened.