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'The Importance of Being John Doar'

Before long, the first thin rays of light will begin to be shed on the most important mystery in Washington. This is because this week, at long last, the House Judiciary Committee begins hearing the "statements of fact" in the matter of the impeachment of the President of the United States.

Even the most studiously neutral "statements of fact" can never fail to convey some notion of the viewpoints of those who prepare them. Thus the real viewpoints on impeachment of the Democratic and Republican special counsel, John Doar and Albert E. Jenner Jr., will unavoidably start to be revealed.

As of today these two—and especially John Doar—are still the wild cards in great game of impeach-the-President that the politicians and the media have been playing for so long. They are not merely the wild cards, moreover. In the end, they are quite likely to be the cards—again with special emphasis on John Doar—that actually decide the outcome of the game, one way or the other.

It is an astonishing novelty in this leaky city, that the real views and approaches of the two special counsel should still be totally mysterious. After all, they have now been at work here for months with a staff of 100, including 40 junior lawyers. Yet only three things are known about them.

Republican special counsel Jenner, to begin with, has assumed the role of the investigative partner of Democratic special counsel Doar. This has caused some discontent among some of the more partisan Republicans, on Capitol Hill as well as in the White House, who think that special counsel Jenner, an eminent Chicago lawyer, should stress his Republicanism a lot more.

This point is far less important than the other two, however, although both the other two points are largely negative. Special counsel Doar has made the investigative partnership possible by firmly rejecting both of the roles most members of the political community expected him to play.

digesting and arranging the vast mass of data bearing on the President's impeachment, and then presenting all these facts to the Judiciary Committee in an intelligible manner. In the circumstances, it can be seen why the final outcome is quite likely to be decided by the way this task is now performed.

You can also see why the central drama in Washington at the moment might well be called "The Importance of Being Doar." But what will be the thrust of John Doar's presentation to the committee—for impeachment or against impeachment?

In the absence of so many facts it is foolish to guess. But if the key question is not answerable, there are some others that can be answered. John Doar is far from being a partisan man—although he is rather plainly a Kennedy-Republican. He will not favor the President's impeachment for partisan reasons, or because he dislikes the singular cut of the President's job, or for the other silly, frivolous reasons heard too often in the intellectual community.



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He has flatly refused to be either a demon-prosecutor, of a headline-hunting investigator. He lives secluded with his inquiry; and both the President's lawyer, James D. St. Clair, and the White House chief of staff, Gen. Alexander Haig, concede that John Doar seems to be trying, above all, to do a decent, fair-minded job.

If John Doar had followed the normal course, striking dramatic postures,

wallowing in front page news, exploiting his heavy responsibility to build himself up as a public figure, his views on the President's impeachment would be known by now. But his view, in that case, would not be important. They are vastly important now, in fact, because the quiet way John Doar has handled himself has earned him much respect.

Add that he and his partner, special counsel Jenner, have the entire task of

Anyone who knows him knows that special counsel Doar is incapable of following the current fashion of thinking that the impeachment of President of the U.S. is a proceeding to be lightly begun. If the facts add up to solid evidence of the President's criminality, the President will surely be impeached. In that case, indeed, there will be no alternative. But if the facts do not add up that way when all the returns are in the "Impeach Nixon" enthusiasts are likely to suffer a severe disappointment.

One senses, in fact, more and more of an either-or situation. Given evidence of criminality, the House will vote impeachment by a big majority, and the President's defenses in the Senate will then pretty certainly collapse. But assume no serious evidence of criminality, and the result will be just the other way—however unpleasant sounding the White House tapes may be!