

Is Impeachment Being Sabotaged?



Jack Anderson

REPUBLICANS on the House Judiciary Committee are trying quietly to obstruct the inquiry into the impeachment of President Nixon.

They have put on a public show of complaining that the Democrats are dragging out the inquiry. Individual Republicans have issued angry statements, calling for the Democrats to impeach the President or get off his back.

But sources privy to the backroom maneuvering report that secret instructions have been given to the deputy GOP counsel, 32-year-old Sam Garrison, to impede the impeachment proceedings.

★ ★ ★

YOUNG GARRISON, a former Spiro Agnew aide, is a tough, partisan conservative. On paper, he is supposed to play second fiddle to minority counsel Albert Jenner, a distinguished Chicago attorney. But our sources say that Jenner is a figurehead and that many of the GOP members deal directly with Garrison.

Garrison has told close associates that he was hired specifically to obstruct the investigation. These were the instructions, he confided, of the committee's senior Republican, Representative Edward Hutchinson, (Rep-Mich.).

As Garrison recounted it, he was supposed to give the impression of cooperation but, at the same time, he was expected to impede the inquiry. Hutchinson had also directed him, said Garrison, to react negatively to all Democratic proposals

and never to initiate any action of his own.

Hutchinson vehemently denied ever having issued any such instructions, declaring that "not one bit of it is true." Garrison, citing committee policy, refused to speak with us.

Nonetheless, our sources insist Garrison not only has told other Republican staff members of his orders to sabotage the impeachment probe but has already begun to carry out the instructions.

★ ★ ★

LAST WEEK, for example, he put up a backstage battle against the committee's long-awaited "legal memorandum" on impeachable offenses. Loudly and forcefully, he objected to several parts of the brief.

As a result of the shouting and his ultimatum that the Republicans simply would not go along with the proposed draft, special counsel John Doar reluctantly watered down certain elements of the staff memo.

By the time he had finished altering the report to placate Garrison, the deadline had passed for printing the document in time for the scheduled meeting. This caused a 24-hour delay.

In short, Garrison and his gang were able, at the last minute, to force key partisan concessions in what was supposed to have been an "objective and professional" legal document.