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# 'Toughing It Out'

What the White House means by "toughing it out" is quite simple. Toughing it out is waiting and hoping for a vote against a bill of impeachment in the House of Representatives. And if the House nonetheless votes the bill, it is relying on the Senate not to impeach.

This is far from being unrealistic, moreover, so long as the President does not mind putting the country through the grinder of an attempted impeachment proceeding, with all its attendant risks of many kinds. In fact, there are strong reasons to believe that toughing it out will work for the President—barring the explosion of another fearfully damaging bombshell.

To see why, it is well to begin with a recent, highly significant meeting between the two Republican leaders of Congress, Sen. Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania and Rep. John Rhodes of Arizona. Their topic was the politics of Watergate, as seen after testing the feeling at the grassroots during the recess.

The Scott-Rhodes conclusions were later summed up by the Senate Minority Leader in his public statement that "history was never kind to regicides." More privately and in a more down-to-earth manner, Senator Scott has explained his view as follows:

"Most of us on the Republican side agree among ourselves that any Republican casting an anti-Nixon vote in an impeachment proceeding will make permanent enemies of about 30 per cent of his constituents. Except in very few states, that's the pro-Nixon hard core. They will never forgive. They will always want vengeance.

"So a Republican who has earned the enmity of the pro-Nixon hard core will have to look for future majorities among the other 70 per cent of his constituents. And at least five out of seven of them will be pretty partisan Democrats."

To this, House Minority Leader Rhodes has added more briefly: "Any Republican who thinks it's good politics to vote for impeachment can't count very well."

These remarks in turn explain the most interesting, least noticed feature of the President's State of the Union message. This feature was the remarkable show of solidarity and enthusiasm by the great majority of Republicans in the House chamber. This meant, as Senator Scott later put it, that "the Democrats are going to have to ask themselves whether they really want an Andrew Johnson-type impeachment, which will look like a straight partisan maneuver to an awful lot of people."

With a few exceptions in the Senate and a minimum number in the House, the congressional Republicans have in fact been aroused to considerable old fashioned partisan anger by the angry partisanship of the Nixon haters. As of now, therefore, Rhodes believes that in a vote on impeachment, he would lose hardly more than three votes among the 187 House Republicans.

One must emphasize that "as of now," to be sure. Another Nixon-damaging bombshell could change things greatly, as already noted. There might even be serious change, if the five special elections now coming up, all for former Republican seats in the House, should show a dramatic trend that can be attributed to Watergate. Yet the political mathematics above described will

still tend toward Republican solidarity.

Genuine Republican solidarity will in turn make a House majority vote for a bill of impeachment exceedingly difficult, if not impossible to secure. Barring another bombshell, and quite without regard to the final action by the House Judiciary Committee, there are a couple of score of House Democrats who are all but certain to vote against impeachment. That is a minimum estimate, in fact; so it is not silly for the White House to hope that toughing it out will end with an anti-impeachment vote in the House.

As to the Senate, there are six Republican members, at most, who might vote for impeachment. One of these, Sen. Charles Percy of Illinois, would thereby destroy his own highly visible hopes of winning a place on the na-

tional ticket in 1976. The Republicans alone, even minus the probable impeachers, are therefore able to block impeachment. There are also at least a dozen Senate Democrats, mainly from the South, who are firmly determined to vote against impeachment — always barring another bombshell.

Again barring a bombshell, therefore, a House vote against impeachment will be an obvious exercise in futility, since there will be no practical prospect of the needed two thirds of the Senate voting to impeach the President. Logically, indeed, the whole impeachment process looks, as of now, like a pure exercise in futility—except that it will tear the country apart, and be full of other dangers, too.

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