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Editorials

The Second Stage Of Impeachment

THE FIRST STAGE of the Nixon impeachment will be wound up next week with the adoption in final form of the House Judiciary Committee's three articles. What next?

Reports have been going around Washington saying Mr. Nixon has been considering a move to shorten stage 2, which consists of debate in the full House and a vote on the committee's three articles. The strategy behind this would be to avoid a second, long-lasting — perhaps 50 hours — exposure on national television of the charges against the President of obstruction of justice and abuse of power.

IT IS SUGGESTED by two Republican congressmen, Charles S. Gubser of Gilroy and Sam Steiger of Arizona, that the President could send a telegram to the House next week asking for what might be called "instant impeachment." It is their speculation that this might have the useful effect of damping down the debate and the shock of the vote. If a long, televised debate should take place, they predict a landslide for impeachment, with the President lucky to get the support of 100 members.

Patrick Buchanan, the President's special assistant, was evidently so shaken by this forecast of what he calls "serious slippage" that he informed reporters that consideration was being given to the President's calling upon the House to impeach him. According to this line of thinking, the Representatives would be so relieved to be off the hot seat of responsibility for deciding the issue of impeachability — the President having conceded it — that the members' zeal and passion would cool and this mood might even spread to the Senate.

IT SEEMS TO US a far-fetched "scenario" or "game plan," and we were glad to see a number of Republicans, including Representative Charles Wiggins, the President's most effective advocate on the Judiciary Committee, speak out against it. The impeachment proceedings, over which the Constitution gives the House "sole power," should at all times be deliberate, open and free of any appearance of maneuvering, most especially by the President.

The Judiciary Committee faithfully discharged its responsibilities in that sense, and the members of the whole House should in their turn debate the articles thoroughly and then stand up before the camera and announce their solemn aye or nay as their 38 colleagues have already done.