

DEMOCRATS AGREE ON HOUSE INQUIRY INTO NIXON'S ACTS

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Judiciary Panel Would See if Impeachable Offenses Have Been Committed

MEETING WITH ALBERT

Leaders Reported to Seek to Head Off 'Sudden Demand' For Immediate Action

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 22 —

Democratic leaders of the House of Representatives tentatively agreed today to have the House Judiciary Committee begin an inquiry into whether President Nixon has committed any offenses that could lead to impeachment.

The leaders, who met for several hours in the office of Speaker Carl Albert, were said by one participant to favor a "responsible inquiry" on whether there have been any impeachable offenses. They reportedly hope to head off "any sudden demand" for an immediate impeachment action by the House without such a preliminary inquiry.

Mr. Albert, an Oklahoma Democrat, and Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr., Democrat of New Jersey, who is chairman of the Judiciary Committee, declined comment. The Democratic leaders are planning to meet tomorrow morning to discuss the matter further.

Both Houses to Reconvene

Following the new dispute over the Watergate tapes and the drastic shake-up in the Justice Department over the weekend, both the House and Senate will reconvene at noon tomorrow facing demands for an impeachment action by the House and for the resurrection of the Watergate special prosecutor's office.

The calls for impeachment—or at least consideration of it—continued to come mainly from Democrats in Congress. Many Representatives and Senators were still out of town for the

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Veterans Day holiday so there was no accurate assessment of the support for impeachment.

However, the fact that many members of Congress, including their leaders, were openly discussing the impeachment question represented a dramatic change from recent weeks when many lawmakers declined even to talk about the subject.

At the White House, a high official, who asked not to be named, said that while there was still "some confusion in Congress, which was spread all over the country, and in the minds of the people" about the President's actions over the weekend, officials in the Administration were confident that Mr. Nixon could ride out the storm.

Nixons at Camp David

He said the President, who was driven with Mrs. Nixon this afternoon to his mountain retreat at Camp David, Md., for an overnight stay, had mentioned the possibility of making a television address to the nation explaining his moves.

However, the official added that it was his own assessment that it was just "something he's talked about."

"When people step back they'll see what the President's done," the official went on. "When the smoke passes I think they'll see what's there."

Acknowledging that much of the immediate reaction from the public and Congress had been critical, the official contended that some Congressmen were already beginning to have

second thoughts, saying, "Wait a minute, what's impeachable here; all he's done is fire a man who worked for him." The official added:

"We're not through the fire storm yet, but I think people are beginning to put it into perspective."

On another front, the Senate Judiciary Committee scheduled a meeting for Wednesday to discuss the dismissal Saturday of Archibald Cox, the Watergate special prosecutor; the resignation of Elliot L. Richardson, the Attorney General, and the discharging of William D. Ruckelshaus, the Deputy Attorney General.

The Senate majority leader, Mike Mansfield, Democrat of Montana, requested the meeting, although it was not immediately clear what the committee could do about the shake-up.

Mr. Mansfield said the resignation and discharges were "matters of the highest importance." He continued, "This is a matter which in my opinion confronts not only the Judiciary Committee, but the full Senate, the Congress and the American people as well."

Impeachment Held Alternative

Senator Birch Bayh, Democrat of Indiana, who is a member of the Judiciary Committee, said he would introduce legislation to provide for the

appointment of a new special prosecutor by the United States District Court.

"If this last option fails," Mr. Bayh said, "we have no alternative but to impeach the President and to replace him with one who recognizes that even Presidential power must be controlled."

Other calls for the creation of a new special prosecutor's office came separately from Senators Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin, Lawton Chiles of Florida and James Abourezk of South Dakota, all Democrats.

Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, who is a member of the Judiciary Committee, said he hoped the committee would call Mr. Cox as its first witness.

Accord Called 'Pretext'

Mr. Kennedy said that evidence was "now beginning to accumulate that Mr. Cox may have been fired for reasons that originally had nothing to do with the tapes, and that the tapes compromise was a sham, a pretext to fire the special prosecutor, because Archibald Cox was too hot on the White House trail."

Under the Constitution, impeachment proceedings must begin in the House. If the House decides by a majority vote that a President should be impeached—an action similar to a grand jury indictment—the case then goes to the Senate, which becomes a court to try the case. A two-thirds vote is required to convict a President and thus remove him from office.

Representative Jerome P. Waldie, Democrat of California who is a member of the House Judiciary Committee, said he would introduce a resolution in the House tomorrow calling for impeachment of Mr. Nixon on the ground that the President had obstructed justice.

Mr. Waldie said he expected that his resolution would be referred to the Judiciary Committee, although he acknowledged that under the House rules a Representative could demand an immediate vote on the resolution, or move to table it.

He said, however, that he would not seek an immediate vote tomorrow. He said it would be "a mistake" to vote on the matter before an inquiry had been made by the committee.

There also was speculation that such a resolution would be defeated if it came to an immediate vote.

Survey of House Members

An Associated Press survey of House members found that 44 said they would favor or would consider instituting impeachment proceedings against Mr. Nixon, while 17 said they were undecided and 14 said they opposed impeachment.

A number of other Representatives also were discussing the

possibility of introducing impeachment resolutions of one form or another tomorrow.

For example, Representative B. F. Sisk, Democrat of California, who is an influential member of the House Rules Committee, has announced that he will introduce a resolution creating a select committee to look into impeachment.

Representative Morris K. Udall, Democrat of Arizona, proposed that Mr. Nixon agree to resign in return for immediate confirmation by the House and Senate of Representative Gerald R. Ford of Michigan as Vice President. This would elevate Mr. Ford into the Presidency.

Representative Jim Wright, Democrat of Texas, who sat in on the Democratic leadership meeting today, said he believed that Mr. Albert wanted to go ahead with confirmation hearings on Mr. Ford before any formal consideration of Presidential impeachment by the House. Mr. Ford's nomination is already pending before the Judiciary Committee.

Many Senators and Representatives who had scattered from Washington for the long weekend said they were still trying to assess the impact of the weekend's developments.

Senator Charles H. Percy, Republican of Illinois, told a news conference in San Francisco that "people want a government in which they believe and they do not have one now." But he added that he saw no basis for a resignation by Mr. Nixon and said the President "should work to restore confidence in government."

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