

HOUSE UNIT VOTES WATERGATE BILL

It Links Prosecution to Its Inquiry on Impeachment

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The House Judiciary Committee moved today to link the special Watergate prosecution to the committee's inquiry into whether to impeach President Nixon.

The committee did so by approving, as expected, a bill that would create a court-appointed special prosecutor and by adding to the bill the requirement that the prosecutor provide the committee's leaders with any information "pertinent" to the President's possible impeachment.

Under the bill, which now goes to the full House for consideration, the special prosecutor would be required to "report at least monthly" to the committee's ranking Republican member "such information as may be pertinent to the question of whether impeachable offenses have been committed."

And at the committee's request, the special prosecutor would also be required to provide the chairman and ranking Republican with any "information, documents and other evidence" necessary to help the committee to investigate whether grounds for impeachment exist. "Did the President commit impeachable offenses?—That's where the country is now," said Representative Jerome R. Waldie, Democrat of California, speaking in favor of the provision at the committee's meeting this morning and, in effect, summing up the arguments offered by the provision's proponents.

Substitute Bill Defeated

Most of the Republicans on the committee had opposed court appointment of the special prosecutor, and indeed, 16 of the 17 members of the Republican minority had first voted, with one lone Democrat, in favor of a substitute bill calling for a special prosecutor but giving the Attorney General the job of appointing him.

This substitute was voted down by the 20 other Democratic members and the one remaining Republican.

The subsequent vote on the bill for a court-appointed prosecutor was a voice vote, with the chorus of "ayes" coming mostly from the Democratic side and the "nays" from the Republican side.

If this voting pattern con-

tinues when the measure goes before the full House, the bill will be approved but with less than the two-thirds majority needed to override the Presidential veto that the bill is likely to bring.

Yet the amendment calling for the special prosecutor to provide information to the committee was introduced by a Republican, Tom Railsback of Illinois. The House Judiciary Committee is the unit that must initiate any impeachment proceedings. According to Mr. Railsback, the question of impeachment will probably arise before the question of a criminal prosecution of Mr. Nixon arises, and the prosecutor's information could thus be helpful to the Judiciary Committee.

Vote Was 26 to 12

Mr. Railsback first introduced his bill, at this morning's hearings, as an amendment to the Republican-backed substitute bill providing for the Attorney General's appointment of the prosecutor. At that point, it was approved by a vote of 26 to 12.

After the substitute bill had been voted down, Mr. Railsback's amendment was proposed as an addition to the bill calling for appointment by the court. That bill was introduced by William L. Hungate, Democrat of Missouri.

The amendment carried again, this time by voice vote. The vote on the bill itself—which provides that the judges of the United States District Court here pick a panel of three judges to appoint the prosecutor—followed.

The Senate Judiciary Committee postponed today until noon Nov. 21 its vote on a similar bill.

In the debate preceding the House committee's vote, more than half of the committee members offered their opinions. Many of them exceeded the five-minute time limit imposed on each speaker, with the result that over and over during the two-hour hearing the timer's bell went off — and was ignored.

Center of Debate

The discussion of Mr. Railsback's proposal centered on the propriety of involving the prosecution in the impeachment proceeding and the possibility of violating the confidentiality of the prosecution's material.

Mr. Railsback suggested that without his proposal, the committee would have no way of getting crucial material held by the prosecution. As for confidentiality, he said that only the committee chairman and the ranking Republican would get the material.

The debate over who should appoint the prosecutor was generally a repeat of earlier debates, with the Republicans warning that court appointment might be unconstitutional and the Democrats generally brushing the warning aside.