



'Let's Get It Over' With Soonest

Joseph Alsop

AMONG THE senior members of the House of Representatives, discussions are afoot which have the theme, "Let's get it over."

The leaders of these (House) discussions are Democrats — as they need to be, in the present House, in order to have much chance of getting anywhere. But their motives are wholly national rather than partisan. They believe that "the country can't afford to go on being torn to pieces month after month, with no end in sight."

The quotation is from the wise Speaker of the House, Carl Albert of Oklahoma. There are plenty of others who share his view, including the powerful chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, Representative Wilbur Mills of Arkansas. If these men could see their way clear to such a result they would like the House to vote a bill of impeachment up or down before the present session ends.

★ ★ ★

THEY ARE inclined to believe the President has done a fairly good job in managing the country's affairs — in sharp contrast to his management of his White House affairs.

In fact, although this is never admitted, they think it considerably more important to have an effectively operational President, than to go much further in trying to get to the bottom of the horrors comprised under the word "watergate."

If you want a bill of impeachment to be voted up or down as soon as possible, and you further expect that it will be voted

down, it can only mean that you give no very high priority to impeaching the President. It is this, of course, that creates a difficulty for these senior men of the House of Representatives, for there are now too many of the leftwing House Democrats who all but slaver for impeachment.

House Democrats of this stripe are also disproportionately numerous on the Judiciary Committee. On the committee, their symbol is the priest-congressman from Massachusetts, the Rev. Robert F. Drinan, who has judged the case already, and wears an "Impeach Nixon" button. In theory, to be sure, the Judiciary Committee can be short-circuited.

★ ★ ★

THIS IS because a motion to impeach must be debated and then voted upon as soon as any member of the House offers such a motion. It is imaginable that such a motion may be offered later, if and when the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Representative Peter Rodino of New Jersey, allows his committee to be pushed into an interminable partisan fishing expedition by Father Drinan and friends.

For the present, however, the problems of the advocates of "Let's get it over" really centers in the Judiciary Committee.

Hearings can be very short or downright interminable, however, according to the will of a committee majority. But a bill of impeachment, reported without prejudice to end argument in the committee and secure early House action, is beginning to seem possible in the future.