

Waldie--Sage Or Opportunist?

By Vera Glaser

Washington

The loudest roars for President Nixon's scalp are coming from a soft-spoken fellow Californian, Congressman Jerome R. Waldie.

His impeachment resolution, cosponsored by 30 other Democrats, will be the key measure taken up by the Judiciary Committee when hearings open early in 1974.

Forty other members have introduced similar resolutions.

To his fellow liberals Waldie is "intelligent, tenacious, loaded with energy."

To some conservatives, he's "wild as hell, a thorough-going opportunist. He's running for governor of California and cutting the cloth to fit the pattern."

Waldie is a hefty six-foot lawyer, now in his fifth term. His relaxed manner — he even makes his own coffee around the office — hides impatience with the slow ways of Congress. That may be why he announced for governor as far back as 1971.

In an exclusive interview, Waldie conceded there aren't enough House votes to impeach Nixon now, but predicted there will be by the end of March, when the Judiciary Committee, of

which he is a member, has built its "formidable" record.

Even before then Nixon will resign, Waldie predicted, and partly in jest outlined a last-minute televised "Checkers-type" speech.

"Nixon will admit he has been covering up, but did it to protect our beloved Ike."

More seriously, Waldie accused Nixon of throwing his personal secretary, Rose Mary Woods, "to the wolves" and predicted the resignation of Fred Buzhardt, one of Nixon's chief lawyers.

"I don't know how Buzhardt can take going to the Hill every 24 hours to explain another missing portion of tape," Waldie observed.

For the time being, Congress is "judicious" and "less than courageous. Nobody's going to cast his vote who is terribly worried about his political hide, and that's about 80 per cent of us.

"But if our committee does its work well, the country will be ready at the same time we're ready to vote impeachment," Waldie said.

Thus far, Waldie's major accomplishments in Congress have been the impetus he gave reform, which eventually resulted in the retirement of aging House Speaker John McCormack, and the reduction of health-insurance premiums for federal employees. Much of his time goes to environmental problems.

Toppling a president, should he succeed in doing so, will outshine everything else so far. That, of course, is one of the things he'll talk about over the Christmas break when he makes his second walking tour of California. His first such tour, during the August recess, took him 360 miles, cost him 13 pounds and gave him a bad case of blisters, but it appeared to have enhanced his gubernatorial prospects.



JEROME R. WALDIE
"Wild as hell"