

The Washington Merry-Go-Round

GPO Impeachment Obstruction

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and Les Whitten

Republicans on the House Judiciary Committee are trying quietly to obstruct the inquiry into the impeachment of President Nixon.

They have put on a public show of complaining that the Democrats are dragging out the inquiry. Individual Republicans have issued angry statements, calling for the Democrats to impeach the President or get off his back.

But sources privy to the back-room maneuvering report that secret instructions have been given to the deputy GOP counsel, Sam Garrison, to impede the impeachment proceedings.

Garrison, 32, a former Spiro Agnew aide, is a tough, partisan conservative. On paper, he is supposed to play second fiddle to minority counsel Albert Jenner, a distinguished Chicago attorney. But our sources say that Jenner is a figurehead and that many of the GOP members deal directly with Garrison.

Garrison has told close associates that he was hired specifically to obstruct the investigation. These were the instructions, he confided, of the committee's senior Republican, Rep. Edward Hutchinson (R-Mich.).

As Garrison recounted it, he

was supposed to give the impression of cooperation but, at the same time, he was expected to impede the inquiry. Hutchinson had also directed him, said Garrison, to react negatively to all Democratic proposals and never to initiate any action of his own.

Hutchinson vehemently denied ever having issued any such instructions, declaring that "not one bit of it is true." Garrison, citing committee policy, refused to speak with us.

Nonetheless, our sources insist Garrison not only has told other Republican staff members of his orders to sabotage the impeachment probe but has already begun to carry out the instructions.

Last week, for example, he put up a back-stage battle against the committee's long-awaited "legal memorandum" on impeachable offenses. Loudly and forcefully, he objected to several parts of the brief.

As a result of the shouting and his ultimatum that the Republicans simply would not go along with the proposed draft, special counsel John Doar reluctantly watered down certain elements of the staff memo.

By the time he had finished altering the report to placate Garrison, the deadline had passed for printing the document in

time for the scheduled meeting. This caused a 24-hour delay.

In short, Garrison and his gang were able, at the last minute, to force key partisan concessions in what was supposed to have been an "objective and professional" legal document.

Jenner, who is supposed to head the GOP staff, has advocated a broad interpretation of impeachment and generally supported the positions expounded by Doar. But it was Garrison, supported by the senior Republican committee members, who prevailed.

Footnote: At a recent staff meeting, committee attorney Richard Cates confessed to Doar that he had mistakenly returned a telephone call to my associate Bob Owens, believing Owens was a friend of Doar.

Sternly, Doar demanded whether other staff members had been contacted by us, and hands were raised throughout the room. Doar growled his displeasure that he hadn't been informed about the calls earlier. He ordered the staff to report to him immediately any calls from Owens or any other reporter.

Following his own policy, Doar politely declined to comment on our story. "I just don't talk to anybody," he said.

HEADLINES AND FOOTNOTES: The government has

quietly stockpiled more than 1.5 million gallons of fuel oil at its two Washington power plants, making it possibly the country's No. 1 energy hoarder . . . Rear Adm. Robert Welander, who denied under oath that he ordered a Navy yeoman to sneak sensitive documents out of Henry A. Kissinger's office, allegedly told a different story to former White House aide John D. Ehrlichman. We have now learned that Ehrlichman made a tape of his conversation with Welander . . . President Nixon has selected another adviser wise in the ways of bugging. Federal Communications Commission chief Dean Burch, who has just joined the White House staff, approved a tap on one of his employees in 1970 in search for an alleged news leak . . . A group of Washington-area Quakers, meeting in Bethesda, has called for the impeachment of President Nixon and are sending copies of their statement to other Quaker meetings across the country. The President lists himself as a Quaker, although he has never attended Quaker meetings in all his years in Washington . . . Comedian Bob Hope's nephew, Thomas Malatesta, is quietly seeking support for a race this year against California's popular Sen. Alan Cranston, a Democrat.

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