

TV Impeachment Coverage Is Pushed

By Donald Smith
Congressional Quarterly

If the House Judiciary Committee votes to impeach President Nixon, the nation might witness a live television drama unmatched in the annals of either television or Congress.

The question of whether television cameras should be allowed to show impeachment proceedings in the House of Representatives and a Senate impeachment trial is becoming a consuming topic for many members of Congress.

Advocates of televising the proceedings seem to be gaining support.

"Putting the House on the air would prove to be an invaluable way of enlightening our constituents on the meaning and importance of the constitutional process of impeachment," argues Illinois Democrat Sidney R. Yates, who recently introduced the latest in a series of bills to open the chamber to radio and television.

To date, Yates' bill has 43

cosponsors—36 Democrats and 7 Republican.

"Broadcasting the proceedings will provide a sense of immediacy and an all-pervasive eye and ear on the events which will transpire," Yates says, "thereby giving our citizens a sense of participating in the operation of their government."

Rep. David W. Dennis (R-Ind.), a member of the House Judiciary Committee, is skeptical. "I'm not crazy about televising any proceedings, because I think they tend to

lend a circus atmosphere," he said in an interview.

Another member of the committee, Rep. Charles E. Wiggins (R-Calif.), says that televising House proceedings "might prejudice a Senate trial."

But, he adds, "The reality is, whether it's covered by television or not, it's going to be given such broad coverage that a senator would have to be literally isolated in an igloo somewhere to not be affected and be aware of what's going on."