

WXPost
MAY 18 1974
White House Pushes for Open Hearings

WXPost
MAY 18 1974
Historic, Vital—and Boring

Nixon Defenders Speak Out

By William Chapman
Washington Post Staff Writer

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

For a week, Rep. Robert McClory (R-Ill.) has been on the inside of history, listening to the record unfold against President Nixon in the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment inquiry.

Did he think the closed-door sessions ought to be opened up to public viewing, a reporter asked.

"One problem with that is that it's so damned dull," said McClory. "The public would be bored to death watching it on television."

A lot of his colleagues agree. Historic and vital it may be, but dramatic and sensational it is not. "Sometimes it's hard to stay awake," sighed Rep. Delbert

Latta (R-Ohio). "The only thing new that I've learned is that (E. Howard) Hunt's safe was not in his office. It was in a storeroom off his office."

Most of the time behind those closed doors is spent reading along with chief counsel John Doar and his aides while they recite from thick notebooks the intricate details of who did what to whom and when in the long story of Watergate.

"It can be boring as hell," said Rep. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.). "You keep reading things like, 'On Oct 2, so and so happened, according to statements by Y and Z,

See **IMPEACH**, A6, Col. 3

The White House yesterday continued its campaign to persuade the House Judiciary Committee to conduct all its sessions in public.

Disturbed by leaks of presidential tape transcripts not previously made public, White House counsel J. Fred Buzhardt said the public ought to have access to everything rather than to material someone on the committee finds "tantalizing."

The day before, James D. St. Clair, the President's lawyer, declared that leaks prejudiced his client's right to an impartial impeachment inquiry.

Buzhardt told reporters summoned to a news session

in the office of Ken W. Clawson, the Nixon administration's communications director, that "we still feel very strongly that great benefit would derive if the House Judiciary Committee would see fit to have its proceedings in public so that the public would have a total picture of what takes place."

The campaign to open the deliberations coincided with what appeared to be a new attempt by Nixon supporters to reply to attacks on him.

Both Rep. F. Edward Hebert (D-La.), who was the President's guest aboard the

See **BUZHARDT**, A6, Col. 1

BUZHARDT, From A1

presidential yacht Squoia this week, and Herbert G. Klein, the administration's former communications director, assailed the media in its Watergate coverage.

And Dr. John McLaughlin, a Jesuit priest on the White House staff, sounded a theme expected to be repeated in the days ahead when he demanded the removal of Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) from the impeachment inquiry because he has "made up his mind" before the evidence is studied.

Clawson has instructed White House officials to speak out more forcefully in support of the President, and Clawson has increased his own efforts to make officials like Buzhardt available to explain and defend the administration position.

The attack on Conyers, a leading critic of the President and a member of the Judiciary Committee, is understood to be part of a concerted counter-attack the White House intends to carry against Democrats as the impeachment battle progresses.

Mr. Nixon is determined to fight unremittingly the effort to oust him from office, according to persons who have talked with him recently, and this would include direct attacks on key Democrats in Congress.

Administration officials were encouraged by an Associated Press survey of Republican state chairmen showing none now wants him to resign.

The AP survey of the 50 chairmen said 14 expressed strong support for the President, 28 said he should not resign and that impeachment proceedings should continue and eight said they were highly disturbed by the President's actions or declined direct comment.

The AP report said that while none of the chairmen was for the President's resignation, only a few said they wanted him to campaign in their states this year.

"Almost all the chairmen said they believed their candidates would do well in November because the voters would not blame Watergate on Republicans," the AP said. All said they hoped the impeachment proceedings would be over with promptly.

Of the 14 chairmen who expressed strong support for the President, eight are from the South, the AP said. None of the 50 chairmen said his opinion of the President had changed because of the transcripts, although at least 10 said they were bothered either by the profanity or by what they called a lack of moral concern.

On Capitol Hill, Sen. Russell B. Long (D-La.) said he has no doubt that the House Judiciary Committee will vote a bill of impeachment and that the "thinks" the House will impeach.

But Long said a vote in the Senate would be "close." The President has "lost some ground since the tapes came out," he said.

The senator said he believes the President has committed no crime serious enough to warrant impeachment and that if he were voting "right now, I would vote against impeachment."

In New York Thursday night, former Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox said he believed the transcripts "support an inference of the President's participation in a conspiracy to obstruct justice." But he said, according to United Press International, that the transcripts do not necessarily prove participation in a conspiracy.



Associated Press

Chairman Peter Rodino and John Doar brief reporters.

IMPEACH, From A1

but those statements are disputed by X' "

What they've heard so far apparently has not changed any members' minds about whether President Nixon should be impeached for trying to cover up the Watergate break-in. If anything, it seems to have hardened those on both sides in their prior opinions.

For example, the closest thing to a sensation this week was the playing of the tape of a conversation between the President, his counsel, John W. Dean III, and his chief of staff, H. R. (Bob) Haldeman. It included some tough words as the President talked, on Sept. 15, 1972, about using federal agencies against their enemies and predicting that The Washington Post would have trouble getting its television licenses renewed.

The reaction of two Californians was typical. Rep. Jerome Waldie, the committee's most vocal critic of the President, responded to the tape like this: "It deepens my sense about this President, which is increasingly a sense of revulsion."

Rep. Charles Wiggins, generally a defender of the President, saw it differently. "When the people hear it (the Sept. 15 tape) it will give the lie to a lot of this characterization of the President. The value of the Sept. 15 tape was whether it would deny or support Dean's testimony that Nixon was aware of a cover-up. If anyone tried to make a cover-up case on the basis of Sept. 15, he'd have a pretty hard time. It would be impossible."

As described by the members, the scene in Room 2141 of the Rayburn House Office Building is unusual for a congressional hearing. The congressmen don't ask questions. They just listen.

An aide to Doar reads a paragraph from a thick notebook. When he finishes a particular incident, Doar chimes in with specific references to material that supports the staff's analysis. Much of it comes from the Senate Watergate committee hearings. Bits and pieces are added from other testimony and from grand jury records.

Each congressman has a large book containing an index of all the material collected by the staff. Each also has a growing file of black notebooks which spell out in great detail what is known about each incident. There is a mass of supporting evidenced—such as records showing when Hunt went on the White House payroll and when he left it.

It is Doar's task to piece all the disparate parts together, usually in chronological order, but sometimes by

topic. Thus, on Thursday the committee heard much that is known about whether the President authorized hush money to be paid to the convicted Watergate burglars or whether he offered them clemency. That discussion ended with a playing of the Feb. 28, 1973, tape in which Mr. Nixon discussed the possibilities of clemency with Dean.

The committee has now heard three tapes of presidential conversations and a dictabelt recording in which Mr. Nixon recalled some details of a telephone conversation with former Attorney General John N. Mitchell.

It has heard extensive material dealing with certain members of the administration who were involved in Watergate. Doar's first statements identified those persons and explained their importance to the rest of the case.

The main focus for the week was on the period from late June, 1972, through February, 1973. The evidence included details on the first government investigation of the Watergate break-in, allegations of hush-money payments, perjury, and the initial White House response to creation of the Senate Watergate committee.

"It's sort of like a Class B mystery at this point," observed Rangel. "You know that at the end Charlie Chan has to come out and tell you what it all meant."

When that point will come is a growing subject of speculation as the inquiry seems to be gradually slipping behind schedule. An original plan called for completion of the material specifically related to Watergate and an opening of public sessions next Tuesday.

But the committee chairman, Rep. Peter W. Rodino (D-N.J.), now plans at least two more days of closed hearings on Watergate for Tuesday and Wednesday. Some members believe the first closed-door phase won't be completed until the following week. Rodino talks

of winding it all up about the first of July, but members speculate that it will be considerably later.

Rodino also faces mounting pressure from restless members who want almost all of the sessions opened to the press. Originally, only six wanted open sessions. But two leaks of supposedly confidential information this week aroused many others to begin demanding more openness.

Rep. William Cohen (R-Maine) estimated that there is a majority of votes for opening the sessions, excluding the press only when confidential information obtained from grand jury records is to be discussed. Ro-

dino has shown no signs of caving in or even of arranging a meeting where the issue could be discussed.

The pro-impeachment Democrats who originally voted for open hearings have now been joined by an odd ally—the White House. The President's lawyer, James D. St. Clair, contended Thursday that news leaks prejudice the case against Mr. Nixon and said that all meetings should be opened.

St. Clair's lead was followed yesterday by White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler's demand that the sessions be opened to avoid discriminatory news leaks to the media.

"This calculated and piecemeal parceling out of information from the committee's supposedly private sessions has violated not just the committee's own rules but the most basic sense of fairness and justice," Ziegler said after conferring with Mr. Nixon at Key Biscayne.

Ziegler charged that the committee members "after hearing only a few days of evidence are distorting that evidence, are making pronouncements of prejudgments about the President and are setting aside any and all considerations of due process."

The president of the

American Bar Association also said yesterday that the committee should open the sessions because of news leaks. Chesterfield Smith said the public must be convinced that the committee is fair and impartial in considering evidence on impeachable offenses.

Smith also said it would be pointless for Mr. Nixon to withhold any more evidence on the grounds of national security. "There could be no damage to the national security from the revelations in the tapes that would be more damaging than continuing a whole year of this never-never land with no leadership," he said.