

WXPPost
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The Growing Certainty

For the first time, during the last week, it has become downright difficult to see how President Nixon can escape impeachment and conviction. This is not because of the President's flat rejection of the House Judiciary Committee's latest batch of subpoenas. It is mainly because the wild card in the impeachment game has now turned out to be a major trump on the side of the President's removal from office.

The wild card, as frequently pointed out in this space, was the Democratic special counsel of the House Judiciary Committee, John Doar. Most conspicuously, Mr. Doar is not the sort of man who would seek any President's impeachment for reasons of current fashion or mere personal distaste or cheap partisanship.

Any practical person must perceive that partisanship, fashion and the personal distaste the President tends to inspire have contributed enormously to the drive to remove Richard M. Nixon from the White House. Being immune—even hostile—to these factors in the impeachment drive, Mr. Doar remained a wild card as long as his own views were also unknown.

In addition, most of the facts in John Doar's possession were also unknown except at second hand. Thus

there was always the clear possibility that he would take a position resembling the first reaction to the published White House tape transcripts by one of the key Democratic leaders of the House:

"You may be convinced a President is a (four letter word). You may have tapes showing that he's a (four letter word); but by God, you can't impeach him for being a (four letter word)!"

The White House loyalists had even built fairly high hopes on the possibility that Mr. Doar would take this kind of position. If he had done so, moreover, it is extremely doubtful whether the House Judiciary Committee would have reported favorably on the President's impeachment—for the Democratic special counsel has handled himself in a way to acquire immense authority within the committee that he serves.

Now, however, a great, quite unreported event of the last week has sadly dashed the former hopes of the White House loyalists. In brief, the whole thrust and tendency of the special counsel's presentation to the Judiciary Committee have shown that John Doar favors impeachment. Furthermore, it is now pretty clear that he favors impeachment on the harsh grounds of presidential criminality.

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It would be silly, here, to try to assess the rights and wrongs of the position that Mr. Doar is now developing before the Judiciary Committee. It is also needless to detail the little signs that indicate this position's character. They are such things as the emphasis placed upon the peculiar background of the final pay-off to Howard Hunt, with all its implications of obstruction of justice.

It is neither needless nor silly, meanwhile, to stress the practical facts. First, special counsel Doar's presentation has been so careful that it has not yet offered real grounds for challenge by the President's lawyer, James D. St. Clair. Second, however, even at this early stage, the odds are heavy that this Doar presentation will continue to develop in a manner more and more ominous for the President.

Nothing is sure in this world, of course. One can imagine, for instance, that Mr. St. Clair, will upset three quarters of the applegarts in Washington by showing this or that key anti-Nixon witness has been taking cash from partisan sources hostile to the White House. After such a showing, the rest of the evidence would hardly matter.

But barring such an unexpected and

dramatic upset, the chain of political logic now leads into the future by a series of hard links that are easy to describe. To begin with, if Mr. Doar comes down hard for impeachment on criminal grounds, the odds are very heavy that a large bi-partisan majority of the House Judiciary Committee will recommend criminal impeachment to the House. If the judiciary committee makes this kind of report, the odds are again very heavy that a large bi-partisan majority of the whole House will send a bill of impeachment to the Senate. Finally, if a bill of impeachment on criminal grounds is sent to the Senate by this kind of House majority, the odds are very heavy, yet again, the President's men will be unable to muster the one-third-plus-one of Senate votes needed to prevent his conviction.

There are other signs one could mention, such as the visible, even measureable decrease of the distaste for impeachment always previously shown by the conservative Southerners in Congress. But the main thing is that unless the President can find some way wholly unforeseeable to break the hard chain of political logic, he must eventually resign or expect the worst.