

Impeachment Unit Plans to Move On To Dairymen, ITT

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House Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter Rodino (D-N.J.) yesterday rejected what appeared to be a concerted White House effort to prolong the Watergate phase of the committee's impeachment inquiry.

He said the committee will move on next week to other phases of the inquiry, despite strong suggestions

from the administration that the Watergate matter be disposed of now. The next matters the committee will consider are political contributions from the dairy industry and the International Telephone and Telegraph Corp. antitrust settlement.

These suggestions have come in the past 24 hours from White House special counsel James D. St. Clair, from Vice President Gerald R. Ford, from House Minority Leader John J. Rhodes (R-Ariz.) and from others.

Their theory apparently is that the case against Mr. Nixon at this point is not strong enough to support his impeachment and that if the key Watergate issue is wound up now, pressure for impeachment on all counts will decline.

St. Clair yesterday described the Watergate case as outlined to the committee by its staff in eight days of closed sessions as "not very substantial."

The last of those closed sessions was completed yesterday with differing impressions within the committee over the gravity of the evidence.

Chief counsel John Doar said it was not surprising that St. Clair found the case insubstantial. Doar's assessment and that of minority counsel Albert Jenner was that the Watergate evidence is of extreme seriousness. But he said members should not make a judgment until all the evidence is in.

St. Clair, the President's lawyer, said in a pre-arranged television interview at the Capitol yesterday, that he feels—and the President agrees—that the committee should call Watergate witnesses now and wind up that phase of the inquiry before moving on to other matters.

He specifically urged the committee to call such principal Watergate figures as H.R.

(Bob) Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman, John W. Dean III and Frederick C. LaRue.

Rodino replied, "The committee will pursue the inquiry in the manner it believes in the best interest of the public." That procedure, he said, is for the committee to examine all staff evidence on all allegations against the President and then call witnesses as needed to fill out the picture.

However, Vice President Ford, who had been urging the White House to cooperate with the committee, said in Charlotte, N.C., yesterday that the committee should proceed with evidence it has and call witnesses before asking the President for more data.

On Tuesday, Rhodes, who also had been calling for White House cooperation, seemed to change direction by urging the committee to stop being "mesmerized" by tapes and call witnesses to obtain needed information.

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Committee members differed on whether the staff had presented substantial evidence on the President's involvement in Watergate.

Rep. Charles Wiggins (R-Calif.), a staunch supporter of the President, said after yesterday's session:

"If the staff has presented the best available evidence, it most assuredly is not an overwhelming case—and that perhaps is an overstatement, it's less than that."

On the other hand, Rep. Walter Flowers of Alabama, the committee Democrat considered least likely to vote for impeachment, said the staff had presented "some very damaging" evidence. He urged members to reserve final judgment until all the Watergate evidence is in.

One reason the committee

wants to set Watergate aside for now is to allow time to gather other evidence, principally presidential tapes that Mr. Nixon has refused to hand over. The committee is expected to issue subpoenas for another batch of White House Watergate tapes today.

Doar said in response to a newsman's question that his staff is preparing "possible articles of impeachment for the committee to consider," but cautioned reporters against making it appear that the committee was ready to vote impeachment.

"Any counsel is expected to prepare ahead," said Doar. "That's our job. There is nothing suggestive one way or the other about it."

Meanwhile, the debate continued yesterday over a plan to make public the evidence the committee has heard so far in its secret hearings.

Democratic members said it appeared very likely that the full committee will vote today to make public all of the evidence except for that drawn from confidential grand jury testimony.

On that point, the committee Democrats and St. Clair are in agreement. St. Clair said yesterday he favored release of all of the evidence received so far. The committee's transcripts of presidential tape recordings should be published, he said. Although he would not oppose releasing the tapes, he said he thought releasing only the written transcripts would be of "lasting" importance.

It is the Republican contingent on the committee that is against making the record public. Earlier this spring, Republicans had generally taken a different position, urging Rodino to hold the hearings in public sessions.

Asked about this switch yesterday, the second-ranking Republican member, Robert McClory (R-Ill.), said the advice this week of the minority counsel, Albert Jenner, had had much to do with the shift in position.

Jenner advised a Republican members' caucus Tuesday that publicizing the evidence could have a seriously adverse effect on forthcoming trials of several defendants. He spoke after conferring with two fed-

eral judges who are to hear those trials.

McClory said another reason for the switch was the Republicans' concern that it would be more difficult than anticipated to winnow out truly confidential evidence before making a public release of documents. The committee has heard a number of secret grand jury testimony that have a bearing on the forthcoming trials.

The committee yesterday morning heard tapes of two conversations Mr. Nixon held on April 16, 1973, with Dean, who then was White House counsel. Both Republican and Democratic members agreed there was little difference between the tapes and the published transcripts.