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**HOUSE UNIT SPLIT
ON ROLE OF NIXON
IN COVER-UP CASE**

**Most Members Unsure if
the Evidence Exonerates
or Implicates President**

APPEAL FROM ST. CLAIR

**He Asks Panel to Complete
Watergate Phase Before
Studying Other Charges**

By **JAMES M. NAUGHTON**
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 29 —
The House Judiciary Committee, completing closed hearings on the Watergate cover-up, appeared divided and uncertain today on whether evidence presented to date had implicated President Nixon in any impeachable misconduct.

But John M. Doar, the committee's special counsel, disclosed tonight that his staff was preparing proposed articles of impeachment in anticipation of an eventual request by the committee for an evaluation of Watergate and other evidence accumulated in the inquiry.

Having ended closed hearings on the Watergate evidence, the committee is expected to turn next week to other allegations of Presidential misconduct.

Meanwhile, Representative William L. Hungate of Missouri and several other Democrats said that the hearings had provided what Mr. Hungate called "a prima-facie case" against Mr. Nixon.

Representative Charles E. Wiggins of California said, "If the staff has presented the best evidence, it most assuredly is not overwhelming." A number of his Republican colleagues agreed.

But the prevailing attitude, summarized by Representative Robert McClory, Republican of Illinois, was one of uncertainty. He said that there was "no clear-cut evidence one way or the other" to exonerate Mr. Nixon or to implicate him in the Watergate cover-up attempt.

St. Clair's Viewpoint

James D. St. Clair, the Pres-

ident's chief defense counsel, initiated a reported new White House strategy of trying to force a swift conclusion to the Watergate phase of the impeachment inquiry.

He told reporters this afternoon that the evidence presented in the eight days of closed hearings was "not very substantial" and said that if it had been a criminal trial he would have been tempted to declare that the defense rested its case.

M. St. Clair also called publicly for the Judiciary Committee to abandon its present plan to move on next week to the presentation of evidence bearing on other, non-Watergate aspects of the investigation of the President's conduct in office.

He said that it would be "a more orderly presentation" to complete the Watergate investigation—by, among other things, calling key witnesses—than to proceed with what Mr.

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St. Clair called a "disjointed" examination of various allegations of White House misconduct.

The committee's chairman, Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr., Democrat of New Jersey, said tonight that the panel would decide how to "pursue this inquiry in the manner it believes is in the best interest of the public."

Chronological Outline

Mr. Doar said, moreover, that he considered it "only sensible and practical" to try to present to the committee a more or less chronological outline of the events under investigation.

Albert E. Jenner Jr., the chief Republican counsel to the committee, told reporters that the staff was prepared to present evidence next week on Mr. Nixon's relationship to the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation and, after that, the White House dealings with dairy industry groups.

Those matters bear on allegations that the President made decisions to settle an antitrust action against I.T.T. and to increase Federal milk price supports in exchange for pledges of large campaign contributions by both industries in 1971.

The conclusion today of the closed portion of the Watergate hearings appeared to bring into almost stark relief the conflicting strategies of the White House and the Judiciary Committee's leaders.

White House officials said privately that a concerted effort would be made to persuade the committee, largely through

public relations overtures, that it would be unfair not to conclude the Watergate phase before turning to other areas of the inquiry. The obvious concern is that allegations about Mr. Nixon's conduct in the alleged cover-up might become fixed as fact in the public's minds.

Thus, the officials said, the White House has assigned Larry Speakes, a staff assistant to the President, to work full-time with Mr. St. Clair on press relations.

Mr. Speakes said in a telephone interview that he did not know "what's behind" his new assignment, but that he assumed his role was to make press contacts with Mr. St. Clair "more orderly."

The White House sources said, however, that Mr. Speakes's activities would be part of an effort to put pressure on the Judiciary Committee to open all its future evidentiary hearings and to bring the Watergate phase of them to a prompt conclusion.

By contrast, committee officials made clear that their intention was to present what Mr. Doar calls an "overview" of some three dozen allegations against the President before deciding whether to call witnesses to explore individual charges or to assess the evidence relating to a given allegation.

Asked at a news briefing late this afternoon if his staff was preparing potential articles of impeachment, Mr. Doar paused before saying, "Yes, we are."

He said that it was part of the staff's "responsibility" to be prepared to advise the committee members on the relevance of testimony and evidence and insisted that "nothing suggestive" was meant by the preparation of the proposed articles.

"Any counsel for a committee," he said, "would be expected to prepare ahead for the day when the committee might say, 'Well, now we've got all this evidence, how do you think we should evaluate it?'"

According to the committee's counsel, the Watergate phase of the inquiry was merely one aspect of an over-all investigation into Mr. Nixon's activities.

He said that the committee had now examined evidence relevant to the events touched off by the burglary of the Democratic party's offices in the Watergate complex on June 17, 1972, and that the panel had a chronological view of the alleged cover-up through April 30, 1973.

It was on April 30 that President Nixon announced the dismissal of John W. Dean 3d, the White House legal counsel, and the resignations of H.R. Haldeman, the White House chief of staff; John D. Ehrlichman, the White House adviser on domestic matters; and Attorney General Richard C. Kleindienst.

would be logical now to con-

sider those matters that came under investigation after April 30 of last year following the appointment of Archibad Cox as the first Watergate special prosecutor.

The Next Items

He said that Mr. Cox had investigated contributions to Mr. Nixon's 1972 re-election campaign—including those of dairy producers and the I.T.T.—and also the activities of the White House special investigations unit that broke into the California office of a psychiatrist who had treated Dr. Daniel Ellsberg.

Mr. Jenner told newsmen those probably would be the

next items to be taken up by the impeachment inquiry, and that the final issue would be the President's dismissal last Oct. 20 of Mr. Cox.

Committee members are to decide at a meeting tomorrow on the next stage of the inquiry, whether the hearings will be open, if they should subpoena additional White House tape recordings and how to deal with the President's refusal last week to honor two earlier subpoenas for White House tapes and documents.

Committee members seemed most concerned today with the quality of the evidence that they had examined thus far.

Representative Delbert L. Latta, Republican of Ohio, said that two White House tapes played for the committee today—of Mr. Nixon's conversations with Mr. Dean on April 16 of last year—tended to exonerate the President of complicity in a cover-up attempt.

"They point out very clearly the President was instructing these people — he told John Dean many, many times—to 'tell the truth,' Mr. Latta said.

Representative Hungate, however, said that the evidence presented today was "the denouncement of Mr. Nixon. He added:

"This building they [the inquiry staff] have been constructing, a brick at a time, is completed, and you can see somebody inside it. It's not a cathedral. To me, all the pieces fit together. It's not exculpatory. Without rebuttal, it's a prima facie case."

Similarly, Representative Jerome R. Waldie, Democrat of California, said that he was convinced that, "clearly, the President had knowledge of the cover-up and participated in it."

But many members said that they considered it impossible to make such a definitive judgment without access to tape recordings that Mr. Nixon has refused to surrender.

"We'll never know unless we hear them," whether other Presidential conversations help or

harm Mr. Nixon, said Representative Henry P. Smith 3d, Republican of upstate New York.

"One problem" with the committee's evidence, agreed Representative Lawrence J. Hogan, Republican of Maryland, "is that there are gaps in the material. This is the reason we should have more tapes and other material."

Mr. Wiggins said that, at best, the staff had presented "a fairly ambiguous picture" of the President's involvement.

Representative Barbara C. Jordan, Democrat of Texas, told interviewers that "all we have heard would not tend to show the innocence or lack of culpability" of Mr. Nixon. But she said that, in fairness to the President, "the committee doesn't have enough information" to make a recommendation now on whether his conduct was impeachable.

Another Democrat, Representative Robert W. Kastenmeier of Wisconsin, said that the staff presentation "does tend to indicate wrongdoing," but that it remained to be seen "if it can be laid at the President's door."