

## Nixon Allies in House Panel Hope to Limit Scope of Inquiry to Hush-Money Question

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WASHINGTON — The House Judiciary Committee takes its impeachment inquiry back behind closed doors today, but the strategy and identity of Mr. Nixon's hardcore supporters are already pretty clear.

Their strategy is to narrow 55 allegations of presidential wrongdoing down to one: that Mr. Nixon ordered the payment of \$75,000 of hush money to Watergate defendant E. Howard Hunt on March 21, 1973.

This strategy is being followed by nine of the committee's Republicans: Edward Hutchinson of Michigan (the ranking GOP member), Charles Wiggins of California, David Dennis of Indiana, Wiley Mayne of Iowa, Trent Lott of Mississippi, Harold Froehlich of Wisconsin, Carlos Moorhead of California, Joseph Maraziti of New Jersey and Delbert Latta of Ohio.

These are the nine Republicans who last week, in a public meeting, voted against warning the President that he might get impeached for refusing to hand over evidence the committee feels it needs for its investigation. Eight other Republicans joined 20 Democrats in voting for the warning. One Democrat opposed it as too weak.

A vote on procedure is a far cry from a vote on impeachment. But from their words and deeds throughout the months of the inquiry, these nine Republicans are regarded as those most likely to vote "no" when the big vote comes.

### Narrowing the Scope

By narrowing the issues so drastically, the President's hardcore backers hope to present the smallest possible target for impeachment and thus reduce the chances of impeachment. They also hope to investigate the hush-money question so thoroughly that no reasonable doubt can remain as to Mr. Nixon's guilt or innocence.

With proof beyond a reasonable doubt, they think they could persuade the folks back home—the Nixon lovers and the Nixon haters—that they voted correctly on impeachment, whichever way it turned out.

While this strategy bears some resemblance to Mr. Nixon's own plan for avoiding impeachment, it's unfair to accuse any of the Republicans of doing the President's dirty work. They have joined Republican and Democratic moderates in opposing efforts by the President to delay the inquiry or, conversely, to goad it into hasty action.

A motion by Rep. Dennis to call 13 witnesses on the single question of hush money sounds like a proposal for delay. But it isn't, if (as he suggests) the committee drops the other 54 allegations against the President. What's more, Rep. Dennis wants to start now on the 30-day procedure involved should any of the witnesses refuse to testify unless granted immunity from prosecution for their testimony.

Rep. Dennis' motion surfaced briefly on Friday and will appear again when the committee opens its doors, probably in a week or two, after Special Counsel John Doar has finished laying out the evidence. But Democrats and some Republicans will oppose the Dennis motion.

### Other Areas of Investigation

Most Democrats don't want to narrow the issues to hush money. While willing to forgo investigating 55 separate charges, they want to have a look at perjury, offers of clemency and other aspects of the Water-

gate cover-up as well as at allegations that Mr. Nixon took bribes from dairymen and International Telephone & Telegraph Corp., that he committed tax fraud and that he ordered the burglary of the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

Some of the more liberal Democrats also want to consider Mr. Nixon's impoundment of funds appropriated over his veto, his attempt to dismantle the Office of Economic Opportunity contrary to Congress' will, and the secret bombing of Cambodia. While the staff isn't actively investigating these areas any longer, Rep. John Seiberling (D., Ohio) insists that "in no way have they been dropped."

Meanwhile, Democrats and some Republicans will oppose calling so many witnesses to testify on a single allegation, be it hush money or anything else. In their view, the House performs as a grand jury, finding probable cause to believe that someone has committed an impeachable offense, while the Senate serves as a trial jury, determining guilt or innocence beyond a reasonable doubt. "We'd call all these witnesses if we were a trial body like the Senate," Rep. Seiberling told his colleagues last week. "But that's not our function."

Rep. Robert McClory of Illinois, the committee's No. 2 Republican, said that while he might insist on some standard of proof "more than probable cause," the committee should "limit the number of witnesses" to those needed to resolve conflicts in the evidence.

Thus, if the House impeaches Mr. Nixon, it probably will leave some reasonable doubts in the minds of some people and if, as currently seems likely, the Senate failed to complete its trial and resolve those doubts before election day, House members would have to face the voters and explain their impeachment vote without positive proof of Mr. Nixon's innocence or guilt.

Those who find this an intolerable prospect are among the President's hardcore supporters on the Judiciary Committee.