

SF Examiner
Impeach summary reviewed

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WASHINGTON — Members of the House Judiciary Committee, in a rare and subdued Saturday session, began the slow process of molding a mountain of evidence into possible articles of impeachment.

Meeting behind closed doors, the committee sorted through a lengthy staff summary of the case against President Nixon.

Even some Republicans called the summary "persuasive" and "impressive."

The White House, meanwhile, issued a 151-page rebuttal by Nixon's lawyer,

James St. Clair, denying the staff's allegations.

"In light of the complete absence of any conclusive evidence demonstrating presidential wrongdoing sufficient to justify the grave action of impeachment, the committee must conclude that a recommendation of impeachment is not justified," St. Clair's brief argued.

Unlike the explosive White House reaction to the staff's conclusions, as expressed Friday by presidential press secretary Ronald Ziegler, Republican committee members raised only minor objections to the summary.

Republican David Dennis of Indiana, an outspoken defender of the President, called the presentation by chief impeachment counsel John Doar "very persuasive."

"I can't help but be swayed by his eloquent presentation," said Dennis, "but I'm not saying it's the gospel."

Yesterday's session, devoted mainly to a review of the staff conclusions, presaged a full-blown debate, to begin in private and end in public with a yes or no vote on impeachment.

The committee will meet again Monday and Tuesday

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in closed session. But beginning Wednesday, under procedures proposed yesterday by chairman Peter W. Rodino, D., N.J., the committee will begin the process of debate for 10 hours.

Following that, probably on Thursday, the committee will begin the process of amending and voting on the proposed articles of impeachment.

A vote to approve any one article means a recommendation for impeachment and guarantees consideration by the full House of Representatives.

Rodino's procedural resolution, to be taken up by the committee tomorrow, says:

"At the conclusion of consideration of the articles for amendment and recommendation to the House, if any article has been agreed to, the chairman shall report to the House said resolution of impeachment, together with such articles as have been agreed to."

However, Dennis said Republicans might try to delay a vote on impeachment if the Supreme Court rules next week that the President must turn over tapes and documents subpoenaed by the Watergate special prosecutor.

Some Republicans are prepared to insist that the committee wait for the rest of the evidence before taking a vote on impeachment.

But Democrats and some Republicans, such as William Cohen of Maine, said they would oppose a "stall."

Cohen noted that the White House has told the

committee it is making no preparations to comply with a court order quickly. And he added, "If the material would exonerate the President, he would have given it up long ago."

Meanwhile, there was little partisan bickering inside the committee yesterday. Some of the most partisan members skipped the ses-

sions to return to their districts or study the staff summary for themselves.

By the time the afternoon session came to an end, only three of the 17 Republicans remained in the committee room.

Doar opened the session by reciting, for some 90 minutes, the President's alleged role in a White House cover-up which, he contends, has continued to the present.

Chief Republican counsel Albert Jenner followed with a discussion of charges linked to an abuse of presidential power and possible willful income tax evasion.

The committee also heard, in the words of Ohio Democrat John Seiberling, "a devastating case" for contempt against the President based on his refusal to comply with subpoenas for tapes and documents.

That presentation, by staff lawyer Bernard Nussbaum, sought to show that the taped conversations Nixon has withheld came at crucial times when his aides were reporting to him and

then issuing orders to further the coverup.

Commenting on Nussbaum's detailed analysis, Seiberling said: "Some of these fellows are seeing things for the first time. We have members in there who haven't been able to see the forest for the trees. For the first time, they are seeing what the woods look like, and it is hitting them right between the eyes."

Republican Robert McClory of Illinois, although among those questioning Doar on some of his conclusions, said he considers Nixon's noncompliance perhaps "the most damaging" charge and urged that the committee pursue it.

McClory and several other Republicans said they would reserve judgment on other aspects of the impeachment case until they hear a rebuttal brief by GOP staff lawyer Sam Garrison tomorrow.