

Pressure Builds on House Republicans

White House Invitations

By Lou Cannon

Washington Post Staff Writer

When Rep. William S. Cohen of Maine was invited for a cruise aboard the presidential yacht Sequoia that subsequently was canceled, fellow Republican Tom Railsback of Illinois said it was just as well.

"It probably would have been the first time," cracked Railsback, "that they would have taken the Sequoia into shark-infested waters."

Railsback's quip reflects the growing recognition among Republican members of the House Judiciary Committee of the mounting political pressure faced by GOP congressmen who are contemplating voting for the impeachment of President Nixon.

"The White House has taken a count and they know they've lost the committee," said one Republican member last week. "Their only hope is to keep the vote down and try to pull it out in the House."

Few Republicans now appear to believe that Mr. Nixon can avoid an impeachment trial in the Senate.

Second-ranking committee Republican Robert McClory of Illinois was merely saying

out loud what his fellow colleagues have been saying privately when he predicted last week that impeachment articles would attract four or five Republican votes on the committee. If the Democrats stick together, this would mean a nearly 2-to-1 vote for impeachment.

McClory went on to say that he believed the House would in all likelihood accept the committee's recommendation.

As the impeachment issue moves closer to the House floor, some Republicans are finding that it is easier than ever to obtain cooperation from the White House on announcement of projects within their districts.

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Supreme Court Timing

By Lou Cannon and John P. MacKenzie

Washington Post Staff Writers

An early Supreme Court decision over presidential tape recordings could ruin the tight impeachment timetable, in the opinion of ranking House Judiciary Committee members of both parties.

Even if the Supreme Court should delay its ruling until the committee has voted on proposed articles of impeachment, committee leaders believe there might be irresistible pressure to slow down the impeachment drive long enough to try to gain access to the disputed tapes.

Committee leaders base this view both on law and politics.

On the law, they do not expect Mr. Nixon to win on his claim of absolute execu-

tive privilege to withhold evidence in 64 White House conversations that Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski contends proves a conspiracy involving the President.

As for the politics, such a ruling would only increase pressure on some committee Republicans to await what Rep. Robert McClory (R-Ill.) calls the "best evidence" bearing on Mr. Nixon's fitness for office.

McClory told The Washington Post last week that he has asked Chairman Peter W. Rodino (D-N.J.) to delay action if there is a high court decision that makes it appear that the tapes, long sought by the committee under its own subpoenas, might be within reach through Jaworski.

The delay could be a minimum of one month or a maximum of two months, McClory said.

McClory's opinion is of great importance within the committee. It carries more weight than that of the ranking minority member, Edward Hutchinson of Michi-

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Impeachment Argument

Excerpts from the 151-page brief filed by the President's lawyers with the House Judiciary Committee appear today on Page A 15. Excerpts from a 306-page document compiled by the staff for the members of the Judiciary Committee appear today on Page A14. The Washington Post plans to print both documents in their entirety in a special section later this week.

Pressure Builds on GOP In House

STRATEGY, FROM A1

Last week, for instance, Rep. Lawrence Coughlin (R-Pa.) told how he had received a tip on a "newsworthy item relating to Pennsylvania" from an administration source, the first time that had happened to him during six years in Congress.

Subsequently, he received a telephone call from the White House congressional liaison office inviting him to sit in the President's box at the Kennedy Center during a concert. He turned down the invitation and received another the next day, which he also rejected.

Soon thereafter, Coughlin received his first invitation to sail aboard the Sequoia.

House Minority Leader John J. Rhodes of Arizona called Coughlin's statement "a cheap shot" because he said that it is not unusual for Republican congressmen to be invited to sit in the President's box.

The Sequoi invitation, however, is unusual and one GOP congressman said with a smile last week that the

White House would have to put on an extra yacht or two before the impeachment inquiry was finished.

Within the Judiciary Committee, the White House has appeared careful to refrain from invitations that might be construed as overt attempts to influence congressmen who will be the first to vote on impeachment. Some of the congressmen themselves have followed the example of McClory, who said early in the inquiry that he would not accept White House social invitations while the impeachment proceedings were in progress.

The real pressures within the Judiciary Committee have come from anti-impeachment letters that, in peachment letters that, in member is quoted as making even a mild criticism of Mr. Nixon. Last week, members of the Citizens Congress for Fairness to the President took to buttonholing some members after the Judiciary Committee sessions and urging them to vote against impeachment.

Usually, the members avoid prolonged discussion with such advocates with polite answers that they intend to vote the evidence. But when three presidential supporters cornered Rep. John F. Sieberling (D-Ohio) last Saturday and repeatedly urged "fairness to the presidency," Sieberling snapped back:

"The best way that we can be fair to the presidency and to the President is to do out job and let the chips fall where they may."

Several Republicans believe that the attack last week by White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler on the committee, which he described as a "kangaroo court," was a conscious effort by the White House to arouse Nixon loyalists against GOP congressmen who are prepared to vote for impeachment.

One Republican congressman said the Ziegler statement was "just one more illustration of the contempt which the President has for Congress—and it's going to backfire."

including Rhodes, have praised the performance of the Judiciary Committee under Chairman Peter W. Rodino (D-N.J.) and see little political benefit in attacking it. There is also lingering resentment among Republicans of varying persuasions at Mr. Nixon's defiance of the committee's subpoena for additional tape recordings and documents.

From the beginning of the impeachment inquiry, the White House has steadily put forward the notion that the Judiciary Committee was Mr. Nixon's most hostile forum and that he would do better in the House as a whole and still better in the Senate, where a two-thirds vote for conviction and removal is needed.

In fact, some Republicans expect a larger margin for impeachment in the House as a whole than in the Judiciary Committee. Their reasoning is that it is far easier to pressure three or four vulnerable members in committee than several score Republicans on the floor.

The pressure building on

the half-dozen swing GOP votes within the committee was implicitly recognized recently when one Republican gave a Railsback staff member the kind of advice which used to be common at police stations: "Strip him to the waist and take pictures both before and after the GOP caucus."

Despite the pressure, the letters and the invitations, however, there appears to be a growing conviction within the committee among undecided Republicans that the best politics in the long run may lie in voting their convictions.

Some Republican members have concluded that there is no political benefit to them in impeachment, no matter which way they vote. Others no longer seem to care about the politics of impeachment.

When Rep. M. Caldwell Butler (R-Va.) was asked last week the familiar question of whether he could survive politically no matter which way he voted, he replied, "I think so." Then he paused and added:

"And if I didn't, the job isn't all that great."

High Court Ruling Could Cause Delay

DELAY, From A1

gan, and McClory is a possible vote for impeachment, which Hutchinson is not.

A number of influential democrats, such as Don Edwards of California and Jack Brooks of Texas would like to move ahead no matter what the court does or when the court does it. In their view the massive evidence already compiled is an ample basis for impeachment.

But committee Democrats are split on this issue. Rep. George E. Danielson (D-Calif.) takes the view that the committee would be in the position where it would almost have to wait to see whether the linking evidence could be obtained.

Another high-ranking member sees a possibility of reopening Judiciary Committee proceedings.

There are several reasons for the sentiment in favor of waiting:

- The committee's draft articles of impeachment place heavy stress on the White House refusal to comply with subpoenas. Thus it might seem difficult to justify "rushing" the articles on the floor when decisive evidence seemed to be on the way.

- A closely related political consideration is that GOP members who can easily justify voting for a non-compliance article would find it hard to stand up to pressure from Nixon loyalists accusing them of condemning the President without waiting for all the evidence.

- Some members leaning toward an impeachment vote based on existing evidence may see such hope in getting clinching evidence that they could withstand the inevitable intra-party re-

percussions of an anti-Nixon vote.

One committee Republican told The Post that a number of members probably would vote "present" if Rodino refused to wait. The result could be a shortage of Republican impeachment votes that would help to put the issue in further doubt on the House floor.

Few in Congress expect that the tapes, if they are produced, will help Mr. Nixon. Even the previously withheld morsel of conversation selected by presidential special counsel James D. St. Clair for his closing argument fell short of exonerating the President of "hush money" charges. Both the authenticity of the excerpted material and St. Clair's right to excerpt it came under immediate challenge.

One of the ironies is that the expected high court decision, although it may deal a sharp setback to presidential claims of unreviewable privilege to withhold evidence, could give him at least the short-run advantage of delay.

Even if the court upholds all of U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica's May 20 order to produce the tapes for his inspection and possible turnover to Jaworski, the screening process in the judge's chambers could take as long as two months. The process must be completed in advance of the scheduled Sept. 9 cover-up conspiracy trial of John N. Mitchell, H. R. (Bob) Halde- man, John D. Ehrlichman and other former Nixon aides.

And even assuming White House compliance with an adverse Supreme Court decision, another round of litigation is still in prospect if the White House is dissatisfied with specific rulings by



REP. GEORGE DANIELSON

... feels panel should wait

Sirica as to what evidence must be turned over to Jaworski. St. Clair might also move to intervene in the courts as soon as Jaworski tries, if he does try, to convey any of the evidence he receives to the Judiciary Committee.

Such political overtones rang through the Supreme Court chamber on July 8 when the justices heard oral arguments and took the dispute under advisement.

St. Clair contended that the special prosecutor's office was a mere "conduit" of evidence for the impeachment inquiry when the committee itself had been unable to obtain the evidence. (The committee takes the position that the executive privilege claims are invalid but declines to go to court about it on grounds that the House is the sole judge of impeachment matters.)

Jaworski and his counsel, Philip A. Lacovara, did not accept the "conduit" label and said there was no issue of a turnover to Congress before the court.

While all the conjecture goes on, the Supreme Court, which could issue its ruling any day or delay it for days or weeks, remains inscrutable. The court has the final say on the timing as well as the content of its decision.