

Debate

On Nixon

To Begin

Impeachment Panel Will Meet Tonight

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Washington Post Staff Writers

After hearing the evidence for 11 weeks in closed session, the House Judiciary Committee will let the nation in at 7:30 tonight to watch as it begins the historic debate and voting on whether to recommend that the President of the United States be impeached and removed from office.

The debate will begin on prime TV time and will continue to be televised during day-long meetings until a final vote is taken some time during the weekend.

The 38-member committee is expected to recommend impeachment by a margin of about 2 to 1. The most likely charges are that President Nixon obstructed justice by his involvement in the Watergate cover-up and abused the power of his office by involvement in a number of acts including the Ellsberg break-in, illegal wiretaps and misuse of the Internal Revenue Service to harrass political enemies.

The committee procedure will be this: each member will be permitted to speak for 15 minutes, according to seniority, giving his general views of the evidence and possible charges against the President.

The committee will debate and possibly amend proposed articles, with each member permitted to speak for five minutes on each amendment. Then each article will be voted on separately. Unlike a bill, there will be no final vote on the package, because each article stands on its own and may draw more or fewer votes than another. The present plan is to finish the job this week even if it means a Sunday meeting.

A total of 29 articles, many of them overlapping, have been drafted by special counsel John Doar and committee

members. An informal drafting committee has been at work trying to refine this down to a small package to place before the committee for action.

It appeared last night that this will be slimmed down to

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two or three articles, though committee members could offer others during the meetings.

The drafting committee has agreed generally on two broad articles, one on the Watergate cover-up, the other on abuse of power. But both will include several counts specifying different acts of alleged misconduct.

A charge of contempt of Congress for the President's defiance of committee subpoenas may be made a separate article, as Doar suggested. But the drafting committee appeared to lean toward making that one count in the article on abuse of power.

A fourth article of tax evasion proposed by Doar has been dropped by the drafting committee, which felt the evidence was not adequate.

The list of articles will be headed by a resolution beginning: "Resolved, that the House of Representatives does impeach Richard M. Nixon of high crimes and misdemeanors. . . ."

The product of the drafting committee has no official status, but will represent the views of a cross-section of committee Democrats working with some Republicans as to the strongest charges against the President, and those likely to draw the most votes.

The committee decided at a business meeting yesterday afternoon that the drafting panel's proposed articles will be

placed before the committee as a working vehicle when general debate begins tonight. It also decided to take final votes on one article before moving on to debate and amend the next. This procedure was approved, 21 to 16, in place of a plan that would have the articles presented af-

ter general debate was concluded and would have put off final votes until all articles were perfected.

The 21 committee Democrats are almost solid for impeachment. Their hopes of picking up six or more Republican votes improved yesterday when Rep. Lawrence J. Hogan (R-Md.) issued a strong statement saying he would vote for impeachment on grounds that the President was involved in the Watergate cover-up. Hogan said he was persuaded of this "beyond a reasonable doubt."

Although Hogan's announcement may have been prompted by the fact that he is running for governor of Maryland on a clean-government platform, it could have an impact on other House Republicans where he has a reputation as a conservative regular.

Hogan indicated he would vote only to impeach on the Watergate issue. On that issue, he said, he is convinced that the President "lied repeatedly" to the American people. Hogan said he believed the House would vote impeachment if members review the evidence presented the committee.

Committee Republicans officially replaced Albert Jenner, their chief counsel for six months, with his deputy, Samuel A. Garrison. Jenner stood with Doar in recommending impeachment. Only Reps. Tom Railsback (R-Ill.) and William Cohen (R-Maine) protested Jenner's discharge at a caucus of committee Republicans yes-

terday morning. Rep. Hamilton Fish (R-N.Y.), who was not present, also opposed replacing Jenner. Cohen called the action a "disservice." Jenner will continue in his de facto role as associate counsel to Doar.

House Minority Leader John J. Rhodes (R-Ariz.) was quoted yesterday, but flatly denied, that he had told Senate Republican leaders that he expected the House would vote to impeach the president. If it does, the Senate would try the case and could remove Mr. Nixon from office by a two-thirds vote.

Rhodes issued a statement that he had told Senate leaders that pro-impeachment sentiment in the house is stronger now than a week ago, but could change any day. "The impeachment situation is extremely volatile and any assessment of the outcome depends on what day it is," he said.

TV Schedule For Debates

Televised House Judiciary Committee debates on the impeachment of President Nixon will begin tonight at 7:30 on ABC (Channel 7) and the Public Broadcasting Service (WETA, Channel 26). The debates will be held Thursday, Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., 2 to 7:30 p.m., and 8 to 10 p.m. The major networks will rotate coverage.



By James K. W. Atherton—The Washington Post

Republicans Rallsback of Illinois, left, and Froehlich of Wisconsin confer.