

HOUSE UNIT PULLS BIG TV AUDIENCE

Substantially Increases
Viewing, Ratings Show

By LES BROWN

The opening session Wednesday night of the House Judiciary Committee's debate on the article of impeachment substantially increased television viewing from the normal summertime levels, according to the overnight Nielsen ratings for New York and Los Angeles.

Based on how the two cities normally reflect national viewing patterns, Seymour Amlen, vice president of audience research for ABC, estimated the national audience for the telecast at more than 20 million people.

Calling it "purely an estimate," Mr. Amlen projected a national increase of 25 per cent in homes using television Wednesday evening, television use was 30 per cent higher in the New York area and 10 per cent higher in Los Angeles.

West Coast viewing was lighter because, with the three-hour time difference, the committee's session was televised there largely during daytime hours, from 4:30 to 7:45 P.M.

Interest in the impeachment proceeding was very high at the outset and apparently declined as the evening progressed, the ratings indicate. For the first half-hour, in New York, more people were tuned to the debate on ABC-TV than were watching entertainment programs on both other network channels combined. But the audience drop-off began after the first half-hour and continued its decline through the evening.

Twice As Large

Nevertheless, for the entire three hours and 15 minutes, ABC-TV's audience was twice as large as it had been the previous Wednesday for reruns of entertainment series.

In New York, ABC averaged 27 per cent of the viewing and in Los Angeles 24 per cent.

Presumably, because viewers switched away from the debate throughout the evening, the ratings for CBS and NBC also increased for the evening. Both networks were carrying entertainment programs, under the rotation plan for impeachment coverage agreed to by the three networks.

ABC takes its turn again Saturday, and if the committee adheres to its present schedule, the final session of the debate will conflict with a professional football game. The network had made plans to carry the Hall of Fame event from Canton, Ohio, a preseason exhibition game that this year will be between the Buffalo Bills and the St. Louis Cardinals.

The game begins at 4 P.M., but the Judiciary Committee, which expects to meet all day Saturday, has set one of its sessions for 2 to 5:30 P.M. In the event of an overlap, the network will cancel its coverage of the football game, an ABC spokesman said.

PLEASE GIVE.

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