

House Leaders Feel Trend Is Against Nixon

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House leaders feel that the momentum of the impeachment hearings so far is working against the President, both in the committee and for future floor votes.

While House Republican leader John Rhodes (Ariz.) said it would be unseemly to take a head count of who would vote for or against impeachment on the floor, he admitted that the hearings so far have not favored the President.

Rhodes still believes there are not enough votes for impeachment on the floor. He says the situation is volatile and could change again in the next week or so.

Meanwhile Rhodes is agonizing over how he will cast his own vote. Aides said he went to Ocean City last weekend bearing armloads of Judiciary Committee material to read, and they describe him as genuinely not decided.

They say he intends to

meet with Republican members of the committee after they cast their votes to discuss their decision, and will not make up his mind until after that. Rhodes also intends to meet with other House Republicans in small groups of 10 to see if there is a possibility of a united front on impeachment. "He thinks it's improbable at this point, but he's going to try," a Rhodes aide said of a united front.

Rhodes' own decision, especially if he should decide to vote for impeachment, could have a big effect on how other Republicans vote.

Majority Leader Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill (D-Mass.) feels the Judiciary Committee has conducted itself with "dignity and decorum" and agrees that momentum is running against the President.

O'Neill predicts that the House will vote impeachment by a margin of at least 60 votes, and adds that if the present momentum con-

tinues the margin could go as high as 100.

He stresses that the Democrats haven't taken a head count either, but in his estimate a maximum of 40 Democrats, mostly from the South and border states, would vote against impeachment, while at least 40 Republicans, from the Northeast, Midwest and West, would vote for it.

If O'Neill's minimum estimate is right, the 40-to-40 offset would leave the final impeachment vote at just about the party distribution in the House—248 Democrats and 187 Republicans.

Republican votes for impeachment are likely to come from the Illinois, Wisconsin, New York, Massachusetts, Ohio and Oregon delegations.

Debate on the floor is tentatively scheduled to begin Aug. 12, with a final vote Aug. 23.

Before going to the floor, the impeachment decision will be cleared with the

House Rules Committee, which will set the ground rules for the floor procedure.

The 15-member Rules Committee, traffic cop for legislation in the House, sets the length and terms of debate, plus amendment procedures.

The Judiciary Committee is expected to take its work to the rules committee on Aug. 5. The presentation could take from one to three days.

On the floor, Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter W. Rodino Jr. (D-N.J.) originally thought he would need 100 hours to debate and consider amendments to the impeachment resolution or articles. That would take approximately 10 days, with the House working 10 hours a day, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., including a Saturday session if necessary.

But Rodino, pleased with the way things have gone in his committee so far, now

thinks he may need only 60 hours.

A spokesman for the leadership stressed that no final decision has been made. How the committee procedure works will help determine what floor arrangements might be worked out.

The rule most likely will be "open," allowing any and all amendments to the resolutions members might want to offer on the floor.

The normal procedure is that the House debates the bill for the number of hours allowed by the rule, with Republicans and Democrats dividing the time equally.

When no more members want to speak, or when the time limit runs out, the House then "resolves itself into a committee of the whole House" to amend the legislation.

Speaker Carl Albert gives up the chair to someone he designates "chairman of the committee of the whole" and amendments are then offered, with each member having five minutes to speak for or against.

If this procedure is followed, the rule could allow 40 to 60 hours of debate, with Rodino and ranking committee Republican Edward Hutchinson (Mich.) controlling the time, then 20 to 40 hours for consideration of amendments.

It has not been decided whether there will be a vote on the question of whether to impeach the President before separate votes are taken on articles, or, whether there will be separate votes on articles first with a final vote on impeachment following that.

Also not decided is whether the House debate will be televised. Speaker Albert said he has not made up his mind, and O'Neill, up to this point, has been opposed to it.



A security agent escorts an unidentified woman from the House Judiciary Committee hearing room after an outburst yesterday.

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