

WXPost  
AUG 1 1974

# Quick Trial Notion Tested, Discarded

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The White House yesterday tried out and apparently discarded a proposal that would have short-circuited the impeachment process in the House in favor of a quick trial in the Senate.

Informed sources on Capitol Hill said President Nixon had told his political counselor, Dean Burch, that he personally opposed the proposal. Mr. Nixon acted after a significant number of GOP congressmen had denounced the plan as a "copout" that would bring the House into disrepute with the American public.

White House special assistant Patrick J. Buchanan said at a breakfast meeting with reporters that there had been "serious slippage" in Mr. Nixon's strength in the House. He said the White House was considering a proposal advanced by some Republican members to concede, in effect, impeachment in the House and concentrate on the trial in the Senate.

Later in the day Buchanan said in a telephone interview that attitudes on the White House staff ranged from "skepticism to outright opposition" to the proposal.

"The drawbacks and disadvantages overwhelmingly dominate right now," he said.

This also was the view among a significant number of Republicans in the House. Typical was the comment of Rep. Alan Steelman (R-Tex.):

"It's simply a means of trying to avoid a tough decision that we have to make. This whole proposal is nothing more than a cute maneuver to pass the buck to the Senate. If we do, the public will become even more cynical and suspicious than they are now."

Rep. Charles E. Wiggins (R-Calif.), who emerged as a leading foe of impeachment on the House Judici-

## PLAN, From A1

ary Committee, also threw cold water on the idea.

"I don't support it at all," Wiggins said. "I can understand the tactical consideration that's involved, but I can't believe that's the role of the House in an impeachment proceeding. I don't care if Nixon called me and said that's what he wanted. I don't think it's right."

House Minority Leader John J. Rhodes of Arizona, trying to steer a middle course among the conflicting Republican currents in the House, acknowledged that the proposal was "cosmetically attractive" to some members, but said that others had serious reservations.

House GOP Conference leader John B. Anderson of Illinois said, "Certainly we are intended to be more than a letter-drop where you deposit these (impeachment) articles on the way to the Senate."

Buchanan stressed that White House interest in the proposal was based upon a desire not to "slam the door in the face" of GOP congressmen who were attracted by the idea of a quick, pro-forma vote.

The plan was first put forward five months ago by Rep. Lou Frey Jr. (R-Fla.), who no longer advocates it, on the grounds that it would push the impeachment process to a speedy conclusion.

At the time the White House wasn't interested.

Two days ago the proposal was revived by two Republican members who are usually strongly supportive of the President, Sam Steiger of Arizona and Charles S. Gubser of California. Steiger is not considered in any danger at the polls in November, and Gubser is retiring from Congress.

Some congressmen were suspicious that the sudden White House interest in the revived proposal reflected a new understanding by the President's strategists that they have already lost the battle to fend off impeachment. Both Gubser and Steiger warned Burch that the vote could assume landslide proportions after two weeks of debate on the House floor.

In this context, these congressmen said, a telegram from the President to the House asking for impeachment might have the effect of diluting the impact of the vote upon the American people and the Senate.

For the first time yester-

day, the White House openly conceded the President's perilous situation in the House.

In addition to Buchanan's appraisal, deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren said there was "a dynamic situation" in the House, and added, "We must be realistic in reading the attitudes of the members of the House."

Only two days ago White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler was flatly predicting that the articles of impeachment approved by the House Judiciary Committee would be rejected by the full House.

The situation did not appear to be much better in the Senate.

One knowledgeable Republican senator said that a head count made Tuesday shows the President with only 35 votes—a margin of two. The senator said that this figure included a lot of "probable" votes against impeachment, including conservatives in both parties who are not necessarily firmly against Mr. Nixon's conviction.

Adding to the impeachment impetus, this senator said, were private polls which show the public favoring Mr. Nixon's removal from office by a 70-to-30 margin.

The White House continued to insist, however, that the President will not resign.

"That's out," Buchanan said several times when he was asked the question by reporters.

See PLAN, A6, Col. 5