

Jockeying Begins on House Procedure

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The jockeying began in earnest yesterday over the strategy and procedure for bringing the House to a vote on the three articles of impeachment recommended against President Nixon by the House Judiciary Committee.

Despite erosion in their own ranks, Republicans met in small groups to plan their counterattack on the articles and to arrange the most favorable parliamentary situation.

A leader of Republican support for the President, Rep. Charles E. Wiggins (R-Calif.), said he favors operating under a closed rule on the House floor, a position which would prevent anyone from proposing any new articles of impeachment.

It would also prevent amendments to the recommended articles. Those three articles accuse the President of covering up the Watergate scandal, misusing executive powers to violate citizens' constitutional rights and defying committee subpoenas.

Some Democrats believe the package might be more palatable if the one dealing with subpoenas were abandoned as a separate article and attached to another article. That would be difficult to do under a closed rule.

Wiggins and nine other committee Republicans who the President met privately had consistently supported yesterday to plan defense strategy, and then met later with House Minority Leader John J. Rhodes (R-Ariz.).

The Republicans agreed to make a point-by-point rebuttal of the articles, both on legal issues and the separate pieces of evidence which underpin the charges, Wiggins said.

Meanwhile, the Judiciary Committee staff buckled down to the task of writing the report which will accompany the articles of impeachment. The main job will be to select the factual arguments that form a "bill of particulars" charging Mr. Nixon with specific violations.

Several Republican committee members said they would not attempt to delete any of those from the committee report, but would reserve their opposition until the fight on the House floor.

Their position will be that they cannot serve as evidence of impeachment since they were not included in the formal articles. They had contended during the committee deliberations that the articles should contain specific allegations, but the majority would not go along.

"They are nothing but a lot of malarkey," declared Rep. David W. Dennis (R-Ind). "They (the committee majority) were afraid to put them in the articles as we wanted."

Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter W. Rodino Jr. (D-N.J.) had said that the report would be finished next Tuesday and that that evening would be the deadline for filing minority and separate opinions. He indicated yesterday to reporters that the staff map have trouble meeting that deadline. He also has not set a date for the committee to vote on the report.

The tentative schedule calls for the articles to go before the Rules Committee on Aug. 7 and to the floor of the house on Aug. 15, with a final vote expected about Aug. 24.

House Majority Leader Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill Jr. (R-Mass.) has suggested sending the articles to the floor under a modified rule

that would prevent amendments to any article approved by the Judiciary Committee. It would permit amendments to strike any entire article or to add new articles.

House Speaker Carl Albert (D-Okla.) and Rodino met yesterday to begin an informal series of meetings to work out procedures. Rodino told reporters he had not decided what kind of a rule he favors.

Meanwhile, Rhodes held a series of meetings with Republicans aligned on both sides of the impeachment issue. Rhodes has not committed himself, but has scheduled a press conference Monday to announce how he will vote.

Aides said Rhodes was attempting to achieve as much party unity as possible despite the deepening split in his party's ranks.

"He is just trying to see that the Wigginses and the Railsbacks of the world still talk to each other," said one aide, referring to the Presi-

dent's chief defender on the Judiciary Committee and Rep. Thomas F. Railsback (R-Ill.), who voted to impeach the President.

The Republicans on the committee, although conceding that some support had disappeared, refused to concede that the case was lost in the House.

Wiggins, in discussing strategy for the floor fight, said, "The question always is how to amass enough votes to win.

"I'm aware that some are saying our side has eroded and the case is nopeless. But you cannot make decisions (on strategy) based on suppositions. I'm not satisfied it has in fact occurred."

Dennis also claimed a good defense could avert impeachment, but he also was looking for alternative ways of saving the President. He said he might try to revive the idea of trying to get the House to censure the President for specific wrongdoing but not impeach him.