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Nixon Studies Bid to Avoid House Debate on Charges

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WASHINGTON, July 31 — President Nixon is considering a shift of strategy in which he would try to bypass an impeachment debate in the house of Representatives and take his case directly to the Senate for quick resolution, White House officials said today.

Patrick J. Buchanan, a special consultant to the President, told reporters today that Mr. Nixon had "not ruled out" a plan whereby he would ask the House to vote unanimously for his impeachment, without debate, so that he could be speedily tried in the Senate.

Mr. Buchanan and Gerald L. Warren, the White House deputy press secretary, emphasized that no decision had been reached on whether to pursue such a plan.

The idea was first proposed by Representative Lou Frey Jr., Republican of Florida, and has since won the support of several other Republican members of the House.

But the fact that the White House has disclosed that the President is considering such a plan represents a sudden and significant shift from its position, enunciated as recently as last Saturday, that Mr. Nixon is "absolutely" confident that the House will reject articles of impeachment.

Chance Viewed As Dim

In effect, White House advisers are conceding, for the first time, that the President's prospects of avoiding impeachment by the House are not bright.

Judging by reaction from key Republicans in Congress today, the plan does not have much chance of being adopted even if the President endorses it.

A number of Republicans, including Charles E. Wiggins of California, Mr. Nixon's chief defender on the House Judiciary Committee, rejected the idea of going directly to a Senate trial, contending that the House would thereby be shirking its

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constitutional duty.

At a White House press briefing today, Mr. Warren said that it would be inaccurate to say that the plan to bypass House

debate was being "actively considered." However, he added, "We are aware of attitudes reflected members of the House of Representatives. We are not naive. We are also aware that this is a dynamic situation."

This response was in marked contrast to Mr. Warren's comment yesterday that "the House should not shirk its constitutional responsibility and each individual member should come to a decision based on the facts."

Until now, the White House has consistently taken the position that the House must reach its own decision on the basis of the evidence and not try to pass responsibility for judging the President to the Senate.

The originator of the plan, Representative Frey, disowned it today. He issued a statement saying that conditions had changed since he made the suggestion and that the House must now go ahead and consider impeachment.

"To do otherwise Mr. Frey said, would be a cop-out to ourselves and the American people."

At a breakfast meeting with a group of reporters today, Mr. Buchanan outlined some reasons that the Frey plan may now be considered.

'Serious Slippage'

Mr. Buchanan said that there had been a "serious slippage" of the President's position in the House in the last four weeks.

He added that the "slippage" was not necessarily irreversible and that the White House would "still go all out to win in the house," if victory seemed possible.

But if there were "no chance" in the House, Mr. Buchanan said, then the White House ought to take steps to "maximize" its vote in the Senate.

He said that there was a "mood in the country to expedite" the impeachment process and that going quickly to a Senate trial would respond to that mood.

The White House, he said, is aware of the problems of many Republicans in the House who must run for re-election in a constituency divided on whether the President should be impeached. If the Frey plan were adopted, these Representatives would be spared having to adopt an individual posture on impeachment and would no longer be "stuck between a rock and a hard place," Mr. Buchanan suggested.

Mr. Warren was apparently giving a clue to the reasons for the President's consideration of

a new strategy with his repeated reference today to the "dynamics" of the impeachment situation and his insistence that "the dynamics can change either way."

He presumably was referring to a growing momentum for impeachment in the House of Representatives since the Judiciary Committee began approving articles of impeachment in its television debate.

The White House now appears to be casting about for some way to halt or slow this momentum and the plan to take the impeachment procedure out of the House in one dramatic stroke might be perceived as one way to do it.

Damage Suggested

By shifting the debate to the Senate, which would take some

weeks to prepare for a trial, the plan could slow the erosion of Republican support for the President.

It would also take the impeachment proceedings off live television for the time being. Both Mr. Warren and Mr. Buchanan suggested today that the televised proceedings of the Judiciary Committee had hurt the President.

In effect, the President would be buying time to allow the seeming landslide mood for impeachment to subside.

According to published reports today, adoption of the Frey plan has been suggested by several supporters of the President in the House who believe that, otherwise, the impeachment articles will be approved by an overwhelming majority of Representatives.

However, comment today by Republican members of Congress, including members of the House Judiciary Committee, suggests that the President would be turned down if he requested adoption of such a plan.

A spokesman for the House Republican leader, John J. Rhodes of Arizona, said that Representative Rhodes was not endorsing or rejecting the plan at this time. The spokesman quoted Mr. Rhodes as saying, "it is something the President has to decide politically."

Representative Wiggins of the Judiciary Committee categorically opposed the plan. "It's tough for people to make tough decisions, but that's what they are here for," he said in a statement. "I can see a political tactic to get some Republicans off the hook, but I won't support it."

"I am concerned about the constitutional aspects of impeaching the President by unanimous consent," Mr. Wiggins continued. "It is the constitutional duty of the House of Representatives to impeach. To do something like this properly there has to be an open debate and since impeachment has been used so infrequently I don't think there should be any short cuts."

Another Republican on the committee, Delbert L. Latta of Ohio, indicated that he could

support something like the Frey plan. "It would, in my judgment, be all right under the Constitution" because "they would be voting on it."

"There isn't anything in the Constitution that says you have to debate" an impeachment vote, he said.

A typical response among House Republicans was that of Representative Ronald A. Sarasin of Connecticut. "I object violently," he said. "If the President came to us and told us to vote against impeachment, we would tell him to go to hell. I think we should say the same thing if he told us to vote for impeachment. This is our responsibility."

In the Senate, Senator Barry Goldwater, Republican of Arizona, said that he was "very strongly opposed" to bypassing debate in the House.

Both Mr. Warren and Mr. Buchanan stated flatly that the President had no intention of resigning. They also said that the President had no plans to take his case to the public with a television address.