

Hearing On Impeach Trial Rules

Washington

Testimony before the Senate Rules Committee yesterday was overwhelmingly opposed to making any major changes in the century-old rules that would govern an impeachment trial for President Nixon.

But there was general agreement among those testifying that the trial should be televised.

The committee, meeting in closed session, heard testimony from eight senators on whether the 106-year-old rules laid down for the impeachment trial of President Andrew Johnson in 1868 should be updated.

"The majority of those who appeared favored the old rules," said Senator Howard Cannon (Dem. Nev.), chairman of the committee.

Cannon said it was believed that by changing the impeachment rules "in the middle of the game" many people would have the impression "that perhaps we're not being fair with the person being charged."

The Senate would try Mr. Nixon under 26 rules of procedure, including one that would permit a committee of 12 senators to question him in the White House.

The rules go into minute detail on how the Senate must conduct itself. They provide for a special oath or affirmation, committing the senators to administer "impartial justice" when sitting as impeachment jurors.

The President has the choice, under the rules, of whether to appear in person during the impeachment trial or be represented by counsel.

If the Senate wished, it could issue its own subpoenas for the Watergate tapes. The rules give the Senate broad subpoena power during impeachment trials and the power "to punish in a summary way contempts of, and disobedience to, its authority."

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