

Conviction in Senate Called Almost Certain

Washington

If President Nixon persists in his plan to fight his impeachment case to the end, he faces almost certain conviction by an overwhelming margin in the Senate, according to congressional sources.

Republican leaders are no longer talking about whether he will be convicted. They are talking about transfer of the powers of the Presidency to Vice President Gerald Ford and legislation to save Mr. Nixon from a possible prison sentence.

Senate Republican leaders yesterday passed the word among long-time Nixon supporters that the President could count on no more than ten votes for acquittal.

A two-thirds vote — 67 of the 100 senators — is required for conviction.

Since Mr. Nixon's release of evidence Monday showing he agreed to a Watergate coverup for political purposes, indignant Republicans have clamored for his resignation or impeachment.

In late afternoon, top Senate Republican leaders, plus Senators Barry Goldwater (Rep-Ariz.) and Jacob K. Javits (Rep-N.Y.), met to consider sending a GOP delegation to the White House.

GOP Leader Hugh Scott said the group will meet again today "to discuss the desirability and means of conveying to the President" the views of Republican senators.

This presumably includes points made earlier in the day by Senator John Tower (Rep-Tex.): the feeling that a majority of GOP senators want Mr. Nixon to resign and the concern that the White House does not comprehend the difficulties Mr. Nixon would face in an impeachment trial.

House Minority Leader John Rhodes of Arizona announced yesterday he would

National Committee Chairman George Bush said yesterday:

"I have steadily maintained that the system can cope with whatever shocks it must absorb. Resignation is

vote for Article I of the impeachment resolution, another factor assuring that Mr. Nixon will be buried in an avalanche of pro-impeachment votes in the House. Article I deals with the Watergate coverup.

Earlier, all ten Republicans on the House Judiciary Committee who had voted against impeachment in the committee said that in light of the new evidence they would support Article I on the House floor.

Representative Edward Hutchinson (Rep-Mich.), the Judiciary Committee's ranking Republican, a strong Nixon supporter and the only member to vote against all four of the committee's subpoenas, said: "In the shock of yesterday's revelation, I feel that I have been deceived.

"Had this evidence been known to me during the inquiry, I would have voted to impeach the President, with

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a heavy heart," Hutchinson said.

Entire state delegations are expected to support impeachment in the House where the most optimistic predictions for Mr. Nixon are that he will receive the support of 75 of the 435 members.

After a meeting of California's 19 Republican congressmen, Representative William Ketchum said he expected a solid vote for impeachment. All 24 of that state's Democratic congressmen are expected to support impeachment.

Representative Charles E. Wiggins (Rep-Calif.), who led the defense for Mr. Nixon in the Judiciary Committee, said that a "proper consideration of transferring power" from the President to Ford "would be to put the military establishment on standby alert."

Wiggins said, "When the

something the President alone must decide.

"If it is to be an impeachment trial, I urge all in an official role to carry out this process in the most judicious and expeditious man-

ner possible to spare the nation more trauma. I am confident the President will do what is right — what is best for the country."

The only senator to speak out publicly in Mr. Nixon's

strongest nation in the world is going through a major political upheaval, there is an opportunity for incidents by nations not above taking advantage of our political instability."

Whatever the outcome of impeachment, Mr. Nixon apparently is counting on the process dragging on for more than six months, while Democratic leaders plan to speed up the process in an attempt to end any Senate trial before the November 5 election.

In briefing Republican congressional leaders Monday on the release of three edited transcripts showing the President ordered the Watergate coverup, James D. St. Clair, Mr. Nixon's chief impeachment counsel, said he expected a Senate trial to require six months.

However, Senate Democratic leader Mike Mansfield said yesterday a Senate trial could be over before the November 5 election if the House moved swiftly to impeach the President.

Because of the new evidence and an accompanying statement of admission by Mr. Nixon in which he conceded that impeachment is "virtually a forgone conclusion," the House leadership has agreed to reduce the time of debate from 10 days to five or six.

Impeachment debate is scheduled to begin in the House August 19. It will be televised under a resolution approved by the House Rules Committee.

Mansfield said he would expect the Senate to give Mr. Nixon and House prosecutors "ten days to three weeks at the most" to prepare for a trial.

If the President should decide to resign after being impeached by the House, Mansfield said, it would be up to the full Senate to determine whether to proceed with a trial.

Some Washington sources have suggested that fear of prosecution has been a factor in Mr. Nixon's refusal to buckle under the intense pressure being exerted to force his resignation.

Some Republicans, including assistant Senate GOP Leader Robert P. Griffin of Michigan, already are talking about legislation to give Mr. Nixon immunity from prosecution after he leaves office.

Griffin, who has called for Mr. Nixon's resignation, said the allegations against him "may not be so serious that people want to see a former President in jail."

The only punishment provided for upon conviction in the Senate is removal from office, loss of pension and allowance benefits, and disqualification from any future federal position of honor and trust.

However, the Constitution also provides that "the party convicted shall nevertheless be liable and subject to indictment, trial, judgment and punishment according to law."

Republicans as well as Democrats have said that the newly released edited transcripts, together with other evidence, show that Mr. Nixon obstructed justice, a felony under federal law.

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Democratic congressional leaders said the White House had not discussed with them any plan which would preclude prosecution of Mr. Nixon if he resigned.

However, House Democratic leader Thomas P. O'Neill (Mass.) said he would not oppose such a plan and believed "the overwhelming sense of fairness" of most Americans would mean they would favor granting immunity.

Republican leader Rhodes opposed such legislation. "I have never felt Congress has the constitutional right to grant immunity for anyone," Rhodes said. "That is completely in the Executive branch. It wouldn't be worth the paper it's written on."

Although Republican Party officials generally supported the President during the Judiciary Committee's impeachment inquiry, GOP

behalf was Senator Carl Curtis (Rep-Neb.), who said on the NBC-TV "Today" show that Watergate was not worth the "panic" it was causing in Washington.

Another Nixon supporter,

Representative Carl Landgrebe (Rep-Ind.), said, "I'm going to stick with my President even if he and I have to be taken out of this building and shot."