

Congress Washing Hands

Washington

The prevailing view in Congress yesterday was to do nothing further to punish or help Richard M. Nixon, but rather to heave a great sigh of relief that the ordeal was over and let him go in peace.

The next step is up to Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski.

The Congressional feeling was not unanimous. Some critics were angry that the

former President made no confession of guilt in his resignation speech.

Some, such as Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (Dem.-Mont.), who had wanted formal impeachment proceedings to continue, urged that the special prosecutor and the courts lay out for the public the full story of Watergate.

But all talk had died away about either impeaching Mr. Nixon or trying to guarantee him immunity from prosecution.

Lawyers in Congress contended all along that Congress had no constitutional power to grant immunity.

And a proposal for a "sense of Congress" resolution stating a desire that he not be prosecuted for any wrongdoings sank from sight yesterday when Senator Edward W. Brooke (Rep.-Mass.), withdrew his support, apparently because Mr. Nixon had not yet sufficiently admitted wrongdoing.

Mr. Nixon's speech to the

nation Thursday night announcing his resignation, Brooke said, "fell far short of what I consider full disclosure of his involvement in Watergate or related matters."

"I'd rather just drop the whole subject," said Representative Robert McClory (Rep.-Ill.), second-ranking Republican on the House Judiciary Committee which recommended impeaching Mr. Nixon on three counts.

"If there's anything we don't need now, it's another

of Nixon

debate over that."

Representative Robert Kastenmeier (Dem.-Wis.), a senior member of the House Judiciary Committee, said that he did not want the former president to be harassed but that, unless Mr. Nixon made a statement accepting guilt, prosecution might be necessary to lay the matter to rest once and for all.

Kastenmeier said he would be opposed to any form of immunity legislation for fear it might inhibit ac-

tion by the Watergate prosecutor.

All House leaders oppose any further impeachment procedures, but one more official action remains: for the House Judiciary Committee to file a report detailing the former President's wrongdoings.

Chairman Peter W. Rodino (Dem.-N.J.) wants this done in a way that would put the imprimatur of the House on the document without appearing to be a House vote on impeachment. Parliamentarians are searching the precedents to determine whether the House might vote on receiving or accepting the report.

Rodino considers the report, still to be drafted, the one document that will lay out for history the whole case against Mr. Nixon.

Mansfield told reporters it was important that all the facts of Watergate be laid out for the public, and said he expected they would be, "through trials and tapes" and other means. He said he expected no congressional action on immunity.

Senate Republican leaders said yesterday that Mr. Nixon had been punished and disgraced enough because of the Watergate scandals and urged that he not be prosecuted.

Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott (Rep.-Pa.) said "I would think a pound of flesh is enough ... without demanding the blood that goes with it."

With Congress reluctant to touch the divisive subject of immunity, the decision whether to prosecute the former president rested with Jaworski, who will continue in office.

An aide to Jaworski indicated that the special prosecutor had not ruled out the possibility of prosecution but he could not predict when a decision might be made.

Sources close to the special prosecutor's office speculated that Jaworski might wait several weeks to see whether some of the Watergate defendants decide to plead guilty, and whether Mr. Nixon ends up in court as a subpoenaed witness.

Most lawyers believe there is no way for any grant of immunity to relieve Mr. Nixon of the responsibility to testify in court.

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