

have said, which are well shown by the record, including what I said when I first opened the meeting the day after the committee was created, and I stated at the first hearings of the committee last year—I am reading from the minutes of October 20, 1966, what I said—and this was approved by the committee, “I do not think a man’s private life is detrimental to the House. No one is perfect, and if he privately has weaknesses, it should not be something that should be before this committee as it would not reflect upon the House.”

But, of course, despite that statement, it is clear that the statute would not allow the committee to look into anything that was not approved by the House in law.

So I don’t know what the purpose of writing the article that way was, and I talked to the reporter about it the day after it came out. It was sort of paradoxical because I also talked to a member of the committee about it and told him how distressed I was. It is my understanding he then proceeded to send it to many Members of Congress despite the fact it was not, I told him, a portrayal of my thoughts at all.

The law requires that the committee would be restricted, it would have no discretion at all to set up standards and pass on standards for Members of Congress. It only has the authority to bring in the Congress standards which would have to be enacted by the House or if it is going to be a law, by the House and Senate and approved by the President.

Only thereafter would it be able to take any action with regard to any censure that would be brought forth by the committee.

Mr. O’NEILL. With regard to the case that is on hand at the present time, which most of this all stems from, the Constitution says, of course, you have to be 25, you have to live in the congressional district of the State, the question of residence and the question of citizenship, 7 years a citizen. How about the fact of the private life of the gentleman, that he had flaunted the courts in his own area? Do you think that would have been a matter for this committee?

Mr. BENNETT. No. The law constituting the committee would prohibit it.

Mr. O’NEILL. You have no idea of changing the basic concepts of the Constitution?

Mr. BENNETT. Not a particle. I don’t have the idea—not only I don’t have the idea, but I think if anybody has a lingering doubt about it, they should change the statute to make it clear. I don’t see how it could be clearer.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Bennett, you keep referring to the statute. What statute are you referring to? Do I get the impression you are talking about this resolution?

Mr. BENNETT. I am saying that if this law is passed, which I am asking to be passed, that the committee in the field of censure could only consider censuring a Member under the safeguards that are set up if the Member had violated a statute which had been enacted prior to the deed done by the Member.

The CHAIRMAN. You have reference then to existing law and not to this proposed legislation?

Mr. BENNETT. I have reference in this narrow respect only to existing law, not to the proposed legislation. The proposed legislation does not set up any standards at all.