

Mills Sees Nixon Out in 1974



Associated Press

Presidential counselor Bryce Harlow accuses Mills of engaging in "guilt by innuendo."

By Tim O'Brien
Washington Post Staff Writer

Rep. Wilbur D. Mills (D-Ark.) predicted yesterday that President Nixon will be out of office by November — toppled by a combination of Republican pressure and public disapproval of his income tax payments.

Mills, the influential vice chairman of a committee probing Mr. Nixon's taxes, said the President would either resign or be impeached before the November congressional elections.

"I think that probably you and I both may well be surprised when the vote occurs on the articles of impeachment over the number on the Republican side who may vote for those articles of impeachment," Mills said.

He offered to sponsor legislation to grant the President immunity from "persecution or prosecution" in the event he resigns.

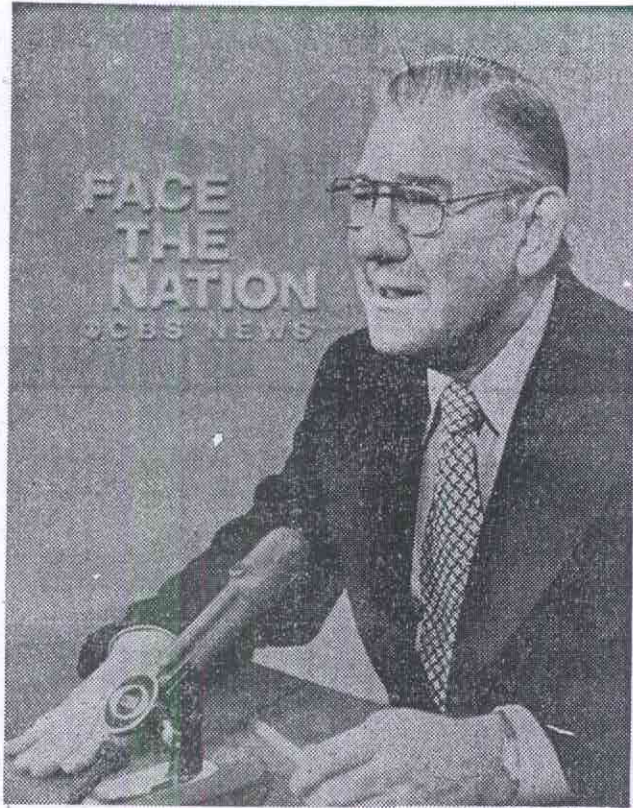
"If it takes this to protect him, and he's willing to resign under that condition," Mills said, "certainly I would make every effort to pass such legislation in the House."

"I didn't include impeachment," he said. "I doubt that if he is impeached, the House would go along with such legislation."

He said many Republican congressmen have told him that to have the President campaign in their districts "would cost them votes right now, with all this in the air . . ."

Rep. John Anderson (R-Ill.), chairman of the House Republican Conference, said yesterday that the President is a "liability" to Republicans in many areas of the country. Continued White House refusal to give the House Judiciary Committee the tapes it is seeking in its impeachment inquiry might "become the basis for a charge relating to impeachment," he said.

Mills said the Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation has not turned up any proof of income tax fraud by the President, but the American people will nonetheless wonder why he paid so little



United Press International
Rep. Mills predicts many GOP votes for impeachment.

tax while becoming a million
aire.

"I don't care how he did it, why he did it, or anything else," Mills said in an interview on "Face the Nation" (CBS, WTOP). "The American public—the ones I've talked to—think he hasn't paid as much taxes as he should and I doubt that anything we could say in behalf of him in our report could change that opinion among the American people."

He argued that the joint committee should not judge whether fraud was committed in preparing the President's income tax returns during his first term in the White House—only that it should determine whether the President owes back taxes.

"Now, the criminality involved in it would have to be finally decided by the IRS (Internal Revenue Service) and transmitted to the Department of Justice" or to the House Judiciary Committee, Mills said.

Mr. Nixon's returns for 1969 though 1972 show that he paid about \$78,000 on an adjusted gross income of \$1.1 million, and that he paid no income taxes in the District of Columbia or California. In those four years, he tripled his net worth.

"I don't have any idea whether they (the committee

staff) have reached any conclusions as to the tax liability," Mills said, "but Senator (Russell B.) Long (L-La.) did say it could go as high as \$350,000."

Long, who chairs the joint panel, immediately issued a statement saying, "I have never attempted to fix a figure on the amount of extra taxes the President may owe on his 1969-1972 returns."

"I have only said that there will be a substantial amount of tax to be paid and that the Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation in its reaudit has found no proof of fraud on the part of the President."

Long said the joint committee hopes to complete its reaudit—made at the President's request—by the end of March. He said anyone "who attempts to fix a figure on the President's extra taxes is indulging in guesswork."

Mills said he had no new information in mind when he said March 8 that the joint committee's tax report would be more cause for his resignation than would Watergate.

"Now I know people know more about taxes and the filing of income taxes than they do about Watergate," he said. "Most people I've talked to have been tired of Watergate already, but they do want the President to pay more taxes. They think that the law would require him to pay more taxes."

"This could bring about within the party—and this is what I really was referring to—more pressure than ever before for him to resign."

White House counselor Bryce Harlow responded to Mills' earlier statement by accusing him of engaging in "guilt by innuendo" and challenged Mills to release any facts to support the charge.

Rep. Anderson, who appeared on the TV program "Meet the Press" (NBC, WRC), said a "majority of candidates will concentrate on conducting independent campaigns. If they are incumbents, based on their own record of challengers, I think they would emphasize their ability to become quite independent of the White House."

Anderson, a respected conservative, defended the House Judiciary Committee in its impeachment inquiry and said that if the administration's strategy is "to go to the country, in effect to go over the heads of Congress and the heads of the members of the House Judiciary Committee, I think this is a mistake."

"I don't think the committee should be demeaned or reviled

in any way. To date, I think its procedures have been careful and in accordance with the mandate we have in the Constitution. I hope very much that this does not prove to be the strategy of the White House."

The joint taxation committee is examining two main issues involving the President's tax returns. One is a \$576,000 deduction he took on his vice presidential papers in 1969. The other is whether he should have paid capital gains taxes on the sale of land adjoining his San Clemente home.

"So far as the capital gains is concerned, I've seen no evidence whatsoever of fraud," Mills said. "There is a possibility if it proves that the deduction of the papers given to the Archives was improper that there would be fraud on the part of someone. Now, I'm not saying the President—under any circumstances—but there could be some fraud in connection with the preparation of his return..."

Another item under study, he said, is whether Mr. Nixon followed the law "when he sold his condominium in the City of New York and reinvested the proceeds of that money—most all of it, I understand—in the San Clemente property and (did) not pay a capital gains."

On the tapes issue, Harlow told the Associated Press that administration resistance to turning over the Watergate tapes is "an attempt to help them (the Judiciary Committee), in a way, to decide specifically what they are trying to do. As it is now, they have no anchor to what they are trying to do."

He said the committee would "love to have those tapes to see if they might be relevant to something."

The New York Times, meantime, yesterday quoted sources as saying that the IRS and congressional investigators have challenged "as seriously inflated and for some years possibly fictitious" California gasoline tax deductions taken by the President on his federal income tax returns.