

Ford Predicts Defeat of Impeachment

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By Tillman Durdin
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HONOLULU, May 17—Vice President Ford expressed the belief here today that a majority of the House of Representatives would not favor impeachment of President Nixon even if the House Judiciary Committee voted for it.

At the same time he urged an attitude of non-confrontation between the committee and the President with regard to the subpoena the committee has issued for more White House tapes that it believes relevant to its impeachment investigation.

Ford sidestepped a definite stand on whether he thinks the President should defy the subpoena and said he believes the committee should consider whether the additional material it seeks is actually relevant and essential.

The Vice President said the committee already has a great deal of material, and said he believes it has enough on which to base a decision. He said it should wait until it has considered all the material it already has before determining whether more is needed.

"At this later stage I hope the White House would cooperate," he said. "But this stage has not yet been reached."

He said committee counsel John Doar and White House counsel James D. St. Clair should consult on the question of the need for new material, and implied that a narrowing of committee demands might be the basis for an agreement for the White House to meet committee requests.

The Vice President expressed these views at a press conference here this morning

given as he began a three-day visit to Hawaii. He arrived by plane at dusk Thursday and today launched into a busy day of speech-making and other activities.

At the news conference Ford took a "let's-cool-it" attitude on impeachment proceedings.

He repeated earlier statements that he feels the transcripts, while not edifying, provide no evidence that the President knew about the Watergate conspiracy and no evidence

that he took part in trying to cover it up. He insisted his view remains in favor of the utmost openness and candor on the part of the White House in the matter.

Ford supported the position taken by St. Clair that the Judiciary Committee hearings should be public to avoid leaks such as the one this week about the President's talk of reprisals against The Washington Post because of its critical attitude toward the Nixon administration.

The Vice President said he knew nothing of a reported move by former Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird to get a Republican Party consensus with regard to the President's situation. Ford voiced approval of the position being taken by leading Democrats against urging the President to resign, and said he thinks members of Congress "on both sides of the aisle" should withhold judgment on impeachment at this stage.