

Ford Backs Probe On Impeachment

Washington

Gerald R. Ford, President Nixon's nominee for vice president, said yesterday in answer to questions that the House of Representatives should "carry on" with an inquiry into the impeachment of the President.

Moreover, Ford said that he would support demands for the creation of a new Watergate special prosecutor's office if a majority of the Congress insisted on it.

Ford, who is the minority leader of the House, outlined his views minutes after the House Republican conference implored three White House officials to persuade Mr. Nixon to name a new special prosecutor and to make public the contents of the secret Watergate tape recordings.

Bryce N. Harlow, a counselor to the President, told newsmen that the Republican requests would be conveyed to Mr. Nixon and that the President would decide "very shortly" whether to name a successor to Archibald Cox, the special prosecutor who was discharged Saturday.

Reports circulated among Republicans in Congress yesterday that Mr. Nixon would accede to the plea and designate a new special pros-

ecutor when he holds a news conference today. A spokesman for the Senate Republican leader Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania said that Scott expected the appointment to be made.

But Democrats in the Senate and the House pressed ahead with plans to enact legislation that would grant Chief Judge John J. Sirica of the U.S. District Court the authority to appoint a Watergate prosecutor totally independent of the White House.

As the public continued to inundate the capitol with demands for Mr. Nixon's impeachment — Western Union officials reported more than 230,000 telegrams had been sent to members of

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House Judiciary Committee charged that Democratic members of the panel, who decided Wednesday to pursue and broaden the impeachment inquiry, were engaged in a partisan "fishing expedition."

•The President's staunchest supporter on the Senate Watergate Committee, Senator Edward J. Gurney of Florida, sent a letter to

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Mr. Nixon urging him to name former Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson

as a special prosecutor and to agree that Richardson could not be dismissed without the consent of the Senate Richardson resigned Saturday rather than carry out a presidential order to fire Cox and dismantle the special prosecutor's office.

•The Democratic mayor of Boston, Kevin H. White, suggested that Congress provide for a new national election if both the presidency and vice presidency were to be vacated. He cited a 1792 law as precedent.

INQUIRY

Ford's support for continuation of the impeachment inquiry was the latest indication that the impeachment movement had not collapsed, as the White House apparently hoped it would, as a consequence of Mr. Nixon's turnabout on the Watergate tapes issue. The President agreed Tuesday to comply with federal court orders to turn over the tapes to Sirica.

At a meeting with newsmen on Capitol Hill, Ford was asked if he would attempt to block the Democratic efforts to pursue the impeachment inquiry.

He replied that he still believed the Judiciary Committee should determine whether there were grounds for impeaching Mr. Nixon.

"We'll want to see what the investigation produces. But the investigation, I think, should carry on," Ford added.

He said that he still had "reservations" about removing the Watergate investigation from the Department of Justice, but he said that "if a majority of the members of Congress feel that is the proper action, I certainly would agree to it."

Members who took part in the closed-door meeting of the House Republican Conference said that there was almost universal insistence on the appointment of a special prosecutor and little vocal opposition to requests for disclosure of the contents of the Watergate tapes.

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