

GOP Group Assured

By Susanna McBee
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President Nixon met with Republican congressional leaders for two hours yesterday and assured them he will cooperate fully with the court and prosecution on the Watergate case.

Rep. John B. Anderson of Illinois, chairman of the House Republican Conference, told reporters afterward that he believes information from White House tape recordings and documents can be made public after it goes to U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica and the Watergate grand jury.

Anderson said Mr. Nixon "indicated he is going to be totally cooperative with Sirica, the court, and the special prosecutor and that he will devote a good deal of time to assuring the American people he was not involved in the Watergate burglary or cover-up."

One congressional leader told Robert McCormick of NBC News that Mr. Nixon said at the meeting, "I never spent any man's money except my own" and, "I can refute every charge that has been made against me."

The feeling that several Republicans got from their "very frank, free-wheeling discussion," as Anderson called it, was that Mr. Nixon believes he cannot make all refutations until Sirica releases him from court restrictions on material subpoenaed by former Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox.

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PRESIDENT, From A1

After a three-month court battle over nine taped presidential conversations about Watergate, Mr. Nixon ordered Cox fired on Oct. 20, but three days later agreed to turn over the tapes, which two courts had ordered him to produce. Last week, however, White House lawyers told Sirica that two of the conversations were never taped in the first place.

In the meeting yesterday, Anderson reported, "there was full awareness by the President and his staff that his credibility has been enormously damaged."

The congressman, who is the third-ranking Republican in the House, said the meeting was "urgent in view of the climate in the country." He said he hopes a "means can be found" to make all information from the tapes and documents "available to the American people."

Anderson added that he thinks there is a "realization" at the White House "that there is a climate of opinion in this country today that is running heavily against him [Mr. Nixon] and steps must be taken to heal the breach."

Others attending the has-

tilly called session in the White House Cabinet Room were Sens. Hugh Scott (Pa.), the Senate minority leader; John G. Tower (Tex.); Robert P. Griffin (Mich.), Senate minority whip, and George D. Aiken (Vt.), and Reps. Gerald R. Ford (Mich.), the Vice President-designate and House minority leader, and John J. Rhodes (Ariz.), who is expected to become minority leader if Ford's nomination is approved by Congress.

From the White House there were, besides Mr. Nixon, his chief of staff, Alexander M. Haig Jr., press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler, counselor Bryce N. Harlow; William Timmons, who heads the congressional liaison staff, and his aides, Tom Korologos and Max L. Friedersdorf.

Tower described the meeting as "candid" and the President as "very communicative" — "he insisted strongly he will do everything to cooperate with the court," Tower said.

Anderson said he was on a private plane at National Airport ready to take off for Chicago at 1 p.m. when he received a call from the White House saying the President wanted to meet with him and his congressional colleagues.

"He was very open; he seemed to be accessible," said Anderson of Mr. Nixon. "It was not a presidential monologue. He wanted to get extensive contributions from all of us."

The congressman said the subjects of resignation and impeachment did not come up. "We discussed the positive steps we think should be taken to restore confidence in his credibility," he said.

Anderson declined to spell out the steps, except to say that "restoration of credibility can best take place with frequent meetings" with members of Congress and with "disclosures" about the Watergate case.

He revealed that Mr. Nixon will have another meeting with members of Congress next week. But he said the President would not go before the Senate Watergate committee "as a witness."

Earlier Ziegler said no decision had been reached on a discussion that White House lawyers J. Fred Buzhardt and Leonard Gar-

ment had Thursday night with Senate Watergate committee lawyers Samuel Dash and Fred D. Thompson on whether Mr. Nixon would meet with the committee.

"We intend to proceed to communicate our position to the press, Congress, and the American people," Ziegler said.

Though he also said he does not think the President will go to Capitol Hill to meet with the committee, he did not rule out the possibility that Mr. Nixon may see members of the committee in various groups of congressional delegations coming to the White House.

He said that in answering charges against Mr. Nixon that have arisen from the Watergate case, "the President has not made any decision at this point as to how he will proceed."

Ziegler added that White House officials feel the charges will not "be cleared up by one specific event, but by a whole process of communications." The first priority, he said, was to "straighten out" the credibility problem that grew out of the White House report that tapes of two conversations subpoenaed by the court do not exist.