

JAN 25 1974

A Plea to

House--Back Nixon Probe

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Bipartisan senior members of the House Judiciary Committee agreed yesterday to ask the full House of Representatives to formally ratify the committee's investigation of President Nixon's conduct in office.

The committee chairman, Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr. (Dem-N.J.) said that the committee would seek adoption of a resolution giving the panel broad subpoena power and confirming "the full prestige of the House of Representatives in anything we do."

Until now, the committee's only mandate to conduct the impeachment inquiry was a request by House leaders that the panel study more than a dozen impeachment resolutions submitted late last year.

Rodino said that a vote on the resolution — which he hopes will take place February 5 — will "explicitly confirm the Judiciary Com-

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mittee's responsibility and jurisdiction."

The vote is not expected to represent a test of House sentiment on impeachment, inasmuch as Republicans and Democrats alike have supported the inquiry as a means of either exonerating Mr. Nixon or fulfilling the House responsibility to initiate his impeachment.

But a committee official said that if the President should choose to seek an early test on the issue, the White House could seek to win enough votes — a majority — to defeat the Judiciary Committee resolution and thus cripple the inquiry before it might reach a crucial stage.

The President told at least three delegations from Congress in the last few days that he would oppose the impeachment effort. Mike Mansfield, the Senate Democratic leader, told newsmen that Mr. Nixon had raised the subject at a private breakfast meeting yesterday morning and had said "he would not resign and he would fight impeachment if it came to that."

Rodino said that the grant of full House authority — including subpoena powers —

would give the committee a more secure legal footing in pursuing evidence from the White House, the Watergate special prosecutor or other sources.

Rodino said Leon Jaworski, the special prosecutor, has reiterated his belief that he is obliged to keep grand jury evidence secret but Jaworski "suggested there are avenues open" to the committee to gain access to the material.

Rodino, who warned Tuesday that the inquiry would be delayed as much as a year if the committee did not get access to the evidence, said that the panel would "explore" the possibility of a direct request to chief Judge John J. Sirica of the U.S. District Court here.

The alternative approaches would be to subpoena the evidence directly or to seek enactment of a law requiring the special prosecutor to make it available. All three possibilities were discussed at the meeting of the eight senior Democrats and seven ranking Republicans who make up an advisory subcommittee on impeachment, but no decisions were reached.

New York Times