

Dispute on Impeachment Rules

Washington

Attorneys for the White House and the House impeachment inquiry are in apparent disagreement about the fundamental nature of the inquiry.

During a 1½-hour private briefing of the House Judiciary Committee on the first meeting between the two sides, counsels to the committee reported yesterday that the President's lawyer, James D. St. Clair, took the position that the matter is an adversary proceeding in which the White House should have the right to file counterbriefs on legal points developed in the inquiry and

to cross-examine witnesses.

Committee attorneys rejected this concept and argued that the inquiry is a "search for the truth" and not a lawsuit.

Both committee attorneys, John Doar and Albert E. Jenner, were careful to characterize the meeting with St. Clair as "cordial." They detected, as Jenner said, "no element of non-cooperation whatsoever."

However, each alluded to the conflicting view of the inquiry.

"There was some sparring actually," Jenner told newsmen, referring to the ques-

tion of whether the inquiry is an adversary proceeding, "but it was pleasant."

Doar pointed out that he and Jenner had tried to impress on the President's lawyer that the inquiry "is not like a lawsuit, but it is a search for the truth."

The White House, however, put forward the argument that it should be allowed to file legal briefs in argument of such issues as what an impeachable offense is and have the right to cross-examine witnesses, should the committee decide to call any.

The importance of such a

position, should it prevail, is that it would allow attorneys for the President to challenge, and perhaps, delay each step of the inquiry.

Members of the committee reported that during the private briefing both Jenner and Doar told them they had rejected the concept of cross-examination and argued that "Congress is supreme in this area."

The attorneys also indicated a special interest in the question of the President's personal finances in their private report to the committee.

New York Times