

Nixon Says He Doesn't Expect to Be Impeached

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First News Conference Of 1974--He Indicates Tough Fight With House

Washington

President Nixon declared last night that the House of Representatives could not impeach him without first finding evidence that he had violated criminal law.

"I do not expect to be impeached," Mr. Nixon asserted at his first White House news conference in four months.

He reiterated that he would not resign from office and said that, even if the Republican party should face imminent disaster in the 1974 congressional elections, he would finish out his second four-year term.

"I want my party to succeed, but more important, I want the presidency to survive," Mr. Nixon said.

The President's statement that the Constitution is "very precise" in requiring proof of criminal misconduct before impeachment is in direct conflict with the judgment of the staff of the House Judiciary Committee, which is conducting an inquiry into Mr. Nixon's conduct in office.

Mr. Nixon's position appeared to signal a determination to resist the request by the House committee for any information that is not

related directly to the possibility of any criminal misconduct.

The issue will be joined quickly. The staff of the judiciary committee reportedly sent to the White House last night a formal request for voluntary submission of some 700 pages of documents and 17 tape recordings to be used in the House investigation.

Moreover, the chairman of the judiciary committee, Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr. (Dem-N.J.), is preparing to send a second letter to Mr. Nixon, asking his personal cooperation in complying with the committee request.

On other domestic matters raised during the 40-minute meeting with newsmen in the east room, the President:

- Declared that the energy crisis is over but the nation would face continued difficulties getting a sufficient amount of gasoline.

- Voiced confidence, based on the projections of his advisers, that the economy would improve but said he would be prepared to provide emergency aid for "spot" areas of hardship.

- Said his advice to Republicans running in congressional election cam-

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paigns this year would be to recall that election outcomes historically have turned on the twin issues of peace and prosperity.

Mr. Nixon was nervous — and seemingly short of breath — at the outset of the session with correspondents over national television and radio. But his self-assurance appeared to grow as he took questions and, for the most part, replied with restatements of positions he had taken over the last several months.

The President revealed for the first time that he had been requested to testify before one of the Watergate grand juries.

He said the request was "a matter of record" but no prior announcement of such a request had been made and routinely such requests to appear before a grand jury are clothed in secrecy.

Asked if the special prosecutor had requested him to testify in any form and how he might respond to such a request, the President stated:

"Well I believe it's a matter of record that the special prosecutor transmitted a request that I testify before the grand jury and on constitutional grounds, I respectfully declined to do so.

"I did offer, of course, to respond to interrogatories that the special prosecutor might want to submit or to meet with him personally and answer questions and he indicated that he did not want to proceed that way."

The reference to personal meetings apparently referred to several offers transmitted through presidential adviser General Alexander M. Haig Jr. for personal meeting, which Jaworski said he has refused.

The President, recapping the nation's energy situa-

tion, said that "we have now passed through that crisis" with the aid and cooperation from the public.

The major remaining problem, Mr. Nixon said, is a shortage of gasoline along the East Coast. He said he had seen it first-hand in his drives around his vacation home in Key Biscayne, Fla.

Mr. Nixon said that as a result of cooperation from the American people and the conservation program of the

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government there is "much better than an even chance" the nation could avoid rationing of fuel.

He said that he would have to veto the energy legislation now before Congress because it would merely "manage the shortage" rather than get rid of it.

A rollback in prices contained in the bill, Mr. Nixon said, would not solve the problem and would lead to shortages that would lead to rationing.

"This we should avoid. This we can avoid," the President said.

Instead of a rollback in prices, he said, the Congress should adopt his proposal for a tax on windfall profits and should relax various environmental standards.

On the question of inflation, Mr. Nixon said it is a "nagging" problem.

It is important, he said, to get to the source of the problems in the areas of fuel and food. The answer is to increase supplies in both areas, he said.

Two-thirds of the increase in prices last year was in these two areas, and he said that the problem could be brought under control by the end of the year.

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