

Aide Defends Resistance on Files

How Nixon 'Helps' Probe

Washington

Presidential adviser Bryce Harlow says that by resisting efforts of the House Judiciary Committee to gain access to its files, the White House is trying to help the committee focus its impeachment inquiry.

Until the committee decides what an impeachable offense is and draws up specific charges against President Nixon based on that definition, Harlow says, the

investigation will wander aimlessly, creating the risk of what he called a constitutional impasse.

Harlow, one of Mr. Nixon's top aides, said in an interview that the White House is not being recalcitrant or trying to hide anything by refusing to open White House files to the committee or to respond to its request for tapes of 42 presidential conversations. A more

"It is an attempt to help them, in a way, to decide specifically what they are trying to do," he said. "As it is now, they have no anchor to what they are trying to do."

Harlow's views reflected a fundamental disagreement with the Judiciary Committee, which regards the drawing of any charges against Mr. Nixon as the final step of its inquiry and one that cannot be taken until it has

examined all available evidence.

The nature of the disagreement can be seen in the following exchange, which dealt with Harlow's repeated references to a need for the committee to be more specific in its requests for information.

Q — What about the request for 42 tapes of presidential conversations? That is specific. It mentions dates, hours even, and people.

A — Those are actual discussions, yes, but what are they relevant to?

Q — The committee thinks they relate to the Watergate coverup.

A — How?

Q — They want to hear them to find out.

A — I understand. Of course they do.

Q — How can they determine relevancy?

A — They have a staff of 101. They're busy, able people. I think they'd love to have those tapes to see if they might be relevant to something.

Harlow said the committee is receiving all the tapes and other documents Mr. Nixon gave to the special prosecutor's office and also has access to the files of the Senate Watergate Committee and other investigating agencies.

"There is nothing new under the sun, really, that they need to have from the standpoint of the essentials," he said.



(P) Wirephoto

Nixon aide Bryce Harlow said the administration is trying to make the impeachment inquiry relevant