

St. Clair's Presence at Issue

Partisan Fight Seen
For Impeachment Unit

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The House Judiciary Committee appears headed toward a partisan fight over whether President Nixon's lawyer should be permitted to attend all sessions of their impeachment inquiry where witnesses are questioned.

Members said presidential counsel James D. St. Clair has written the committee asking that he or his representative be admitted to every meeting where the committee or its staff takes testimony. He told them this was a right granted defense counsel in previous impeachment proceedings.

The question was discussed at a caucus of committee Democrats yesterday, and the first reaction of most members was that St. Clair's request should be rejected.

Chairman Peter W. Rodino (D-N.J.) repeated his statement that "this is not an adversary proceedings," but a fact-finding inquiry. For the same reason Rodino has opposed St. Clair's request that he be permitted to see the Watergate grand jury's sealed

briefcase of materials concerning Mr. Nixon's connection with Watergate which U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica has ordered be given to the committee.

Committee Republicans also met alone yesterday, and most of them expressed the view that St. Clair's request should be granted, at least in part. They noted that committee rules permit a subpoenaed witness to be accompanied by counsel when giving testimony by deposition, and said counsel for the target of the impeachment inquiry should be permitted to attend such sessions.

The chief purpose of the Republican meeting apparently was to be brought up to date by their counsel, Albert Jenner, on what is going on in the headquarters of the impeachment staff. Rep. Tom Railsback (R-Ill.) and others expressed resentment that committee members can't read letters that committee counsel John Doar is sending to St. Clair requesting information.