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White House Silent on Impeachment

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WASHINGTON, May 15—The White House, which disclosed some of President Nixon's most sensitive conversations when it released recently the transcript of some Watergate tapes, appeared to be taking an opposite tack this week and seeking to remain silent on the entire impeachment issue.

The White House would say almost nothing at all, for example, about whether it would comply with two new subpoenas for tape recordings issued by the House Judiciary Committee for its impeachment inquiry.

At the regular news briefing this morning, Gerald L. Warren, the deputy press secretary, said that he would not comment on the subpoenas because of what he said was a White House policy of not discussing matters that were in executive session.

He said that it would not be proper to discuss these matters and would reiterate only that "the President believes the House Judiciary Committee has all the evidence it needs to make a decision."

Mr. Warren said that as far as he knew there was no change in the policy enunciated last week by the White House counsel, James D. St. Clair, that the White House would provide no additional materials on the Watergate issue.

However, Mr. Warren made it clear that his statement was not to be taken as a comment on whether the President would comply with the new subpoenas.

Although the White House would make no public comment on the subpoenas, Mr. St. Clair did submit to the Judiciary

Committee two memorandums opposing them on the ground that the committee had sufficient evidence already.

Mr. Warren and other White House staff officials declined this week to provide information on the mechanics of preparing the long transcripts of the Watergate tapes. When asked who had prepared the transcripts, how many secretaries had been involved and how long the task had taken, he replied, "We are not talking about that."

When asked why, he responded, "It was felt that no useful purpose would be served by it." He would say nothing further.

However, a source close to the White House staff said that silence was being maintained on this subject because it was feared that if those who had worked on the transcripts were identified, they might be subpoenaed by one of the inquiries into the Watergate affair.

Asked about this, Mr. Warren said, "I have not heard anything about that." J. Fred Buzhardt Jr., the White House counsel who reportedly was in charge of preparing the transcript, could not be reached all week for comment.

Meanwhile, the President appeared to be cultivating support. Last night, he entertained nine members of Congress aboard the Presidential Yacht, Sequoia. One of them, Representative Richard H. Ichord, Democrat of Missouri, said in a telephone interview today that the President had emphatically denied any guilt in the Watergate break-in or cover-up and asserted to his guests, "I am certainly not that stupid."

Mr. Ichord said that although impeachment had been discussed, the President had not asked his guests for support in

an impeachment vote. "No 'No pledges were asked for, and none were given," Mr. Ichord reported.

Today, Mr. Nixon received another deputation of citizens rally to his support. Olive Rowe and Andy Unterer of Charlotte, N. C., presented him with a petition of support bearing 7,000 signatures.

The White House press office has been announcing such visits from private citizens supporting the President almost daily.

Yesterday, the President received Julius Klein, who was identified as vice chairman of the National Committee for Fairness to the Presidency. Mr. Klein is the Chicago public relations man who was a central figure in the case that brought severe criticisms of the late Senator Thomas J. Dodd, Democrat of Connecticut, in 1966.

Mr. Klein, a former major general and long-time Nixon supporter, testified that he had urged Senator Dodd to intercede on his behalf with German officials in an effort to salvage his reputation and save a \$150,000-a-year public relations contract.