

DEMOCRATS SEEK MORE WITNESSES

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Four on Panel Say Ford's
Testimony on the Pardon
Raised New Questions
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WASHINGTON, Oct. 17—Declaring that President Ford's testimony today concerning his pardon of Richard M. Nixon had raised new questions, four Democrats on the House Judiciary subcommittee that heard him said they would press to call additional witnesses.

In contrast, the four subcommittee Republicans said that they were satisfied that the full story had been told, and that there was no need to question additional witnesses.

Thus, it appears that there will be a partisan clash within the nine-member subcommittee when Congress returns from an election recess in mid-November.

Possible Witnesses Listed

While not joining his four Democratic colleagues in calling for additional witnesses, the subcommittee chairman William Hungate of Missouri, indicated that he, too, felt that some further questions needed to be answered.

"I'm not sure just what we'll decide to do," he said, "but we've still got a lot to do. We'll decide after the recess."

There are several courses that the subcommittee could take when it returns.

It could vote to call other witnesses—possibly Congressional sources aid, Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., who was Mr. Nixon's chief of staff and the man who informed Mr.

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Ford in early August of damaging evidence against the then President; Benton L. Becker, a Washington lawyer who negotiated an agreement giving Mr. Nixon custody of White House tape recordings, and Leon Jaworski, the Watergate special prosecutor.

Instead of hearing witnesses in person, the subcommittee could direct a full staff inquiry, involving questioning of persons who might shed some light on the tapes and pardon issues.

Still another course, one that Republicans are likely to push, is to seek to end the pardon inquiry.

'Difficult to Accept'

The authors of two resolutions of inquiry that brought Mr. Ford before the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice today—Bella S. Abzug of Manhattan and John Conyers Jr. of Michigan, both Democrats—said today that they felt the President's appearance had failed to answer satisfactorily the questions they had raised.

While stopping short of saying that they felt Mr. Ford had not been completely truthful, both said that they did not think that the evidence was clear that no deal had been

made on granting Mr. Nixon a pardon.

"I just don't believe the whole story holds together," Mrs. Abzug said. "I find it difficult to accept."

"I find it incredible to believe that President Ford talked to nobody about granting a pardon," Mr. Conyers said.

Mrs. Abzug said that she felt additional witnesses, including General Haig and Mr. Becker, should be called to testify.

Mr. Conyers, on the other hand, said that he was not sure that further inquiries would prove useful.

"It's all over," he said. "I know when we've been finessed by the Congress and the White House."

Declaring that the subcommittee had performed a "cover-up" of its own by failing to question other witnesses before Mr. Ford appeared, he said, "It would be futile now to talk to anybody else. They'd have to support [the President's] version now."

Despite Mr. Conyer's gloomy assessment of what might still be learned about the pardon issue, a majority of subcommittee Democrats said today that they wanted to question other witnesses to resolve what they called "new and old questions."

The suggestion for additional witnesses came not just from the subcommittee's three liberal

Democrats — Don Edwards of California, Robert W. Kastenmeier of Wisconsin and Elizabeth Holtzman of Brooklyn—but also from a Southern conservative, James R. Mann of South Carolina.

"I think the President did a pretty good job," Mr. Mann said. "But I'm sure the subcommittee will want to go ahead and develop more witnesses."

Mr. Mann said that he was particularly interested in learning from Mr. Jaworski what effect the Nixon pardon had on the special prosecutor's efforts in the Watergate trials.

"Then, we may want to hear Becker, maybe Haig," Mr. Mann said.

Miss Holtzman said that many questions had been left unresolved by the President's appearance. Among those, she said, were the identity of those who discussed Mr. Nixon's health with President Ford and the full text of conversation between General Haig and Mr. Ford about the possible resignation of Mr. Nixon.

Concern Expressed

Miss Holtzman said that she also wanted an explanation of another question, which she raised at today's hearing, of why the White House had chosen Mr. Becker to negotiate the tapes agreement at a time that

he, himself, was under investigation for possible tax fraud.

The subcommittee Democrats also expressed concern over President Ford's admission in today's testimony that he had continued to say that he felt that Mr. Nixon was not guilty of any impeachable offense even after learning from General Haig in early August of the damaging evidence against him.

Mr. Ford testified that he feared any change from his previously stated defense of Mr. Nixon or even refusal to comment would lead in the press to conclusions that "I now wanted to see the President resign to avoid an impeachment vote in the House and probable conviction in the Senate."

"That sort of shakes your confidence in your President," Mr. Edwards said later. "One should never, never fail to tell the truth."

The four subcommittee Republicans—Wiley Mayne of Iowa, Henry Smith of upstate New York, Lawrence J. Hogan of Maryland and David W. Dennis of Indiana—said that they were satisfied that Mr. Ford had been completely candid and had told the full truth about the pardon.

"He says there was no deal," Mr. Dennis said. "Either he was lying or telling the truth, and I, for one, think he was telling the truth."