

3-25-74
NYT

BAKER BIDS NIXON GIVE HOUSE PANEL 'RELEVANT' TAPES

Also Calls on Committee to Honor Any 'Reasonable Request' by President

URGES VOLUNTARY ACTS

Senator Says Impeachment Process Should Eschew 'Narrow Legalisms'

By PHILIP SHABECOFF

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 24

The ranking Republican on the Senate Watergate committee, Senator Howard H. Baker Jr. of Tennessee, urged President Nixon today to turn all "relevant" tapes and documents over to the House Judiciary Committee.

Interviewed on the Columbia Broadcasting System television program "Face the Nation," Senator Baker also said that the House committee, which is deliberating the possible impeachment of the President, ought to honor "whatever reasonable request the President makes, such as the presence of counsel in the principal deliberations and investigation of the committee."

No 'Narrow Legalism'

Senator Baker asserted that the impeachment process, which he described as "that magnificent confrontation" between the President and Congress, should not be conducted on a "narrow legalism" such as whether the President had the right to withhold material.

He said that the country and the future of the Presidency "would be better served by a forthcoming spirit and supplying voluntarily whatever is decently relevant or arguably relevant."

President Nixon has thus far refused to turn over additional tapes and documents requested by both the Judiciary Committee and the special Watergate

prosecutor's office, citing the doctrine of executive privilege. Mr. Nixon said the office of the Presidency would be severely damaged if he allowed these organizations to engage in "fishing expeditions" in the White House.

Jury Report Awaited

Yesterday, the White House press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, denied published reports that the White House was prepared to turn over 42 additional tape recordings sought by the House committee.

The Judiciary Committee, meanwhile, is expected to get a secret grand jury report tomorrow on President Nixon's conduct in the Watergate scandal.

Lawyers for two Watergate defendants, H. R. Haldeman, former White House chief of staff, and Gordon Strachan, Mr. Haldeman's assistant, have un-

Continued on Page 26, Column 3

THE NEW YORK TIMES, MONDAY, MARCH 25, 1974

BAKER BIDS NIXON GIVE PANEL TAPES

Continued From Page 1, Col. 8

til 5 P.M. tomorrow to carry to the Supreme Court their challenge of Federal District Court Judge John J. Sirica's decision last Monday to send the report to the committee. The deadline was fixed by the United States Court of Appeals Thursday in upholding Judge Sirica's decision.

Frank H. Strickler, one of Mr. Haldeman's lawyers, said on Thursday that an appeal would be taken on Mr. Haldeman's behalf only if lawyers for Mr. Strachan decided to appeal on their client's behalf. John Bray, Mr. Strachan's lawyer, said today that he had decided against an appeal and would notify the court early tomorrow.

Senator Baker in the interview declared that "the country doesn't want a long-scale production and a long-winded argument on what the documents are. They want the tapes they want to hear."

Both the President and Congress, he said, "would disserve their constituency" if the impeachment process bogged down on narrow legalisms such as the right of access to the tapes.

Mr. Baker specifically recommended that the President make available to the public the tape of his conversation of March 21, 1973, with his former counsel, John W. Dean 3d. This is the conversation involving possible hush money paid to the original Watergate burglars.

Last Aug. 15, Mr. Nixon said at a news conference that he had discussed only payment for legal assistance to the Watergate defendants. Then, at a news conference on March 6, he said that Mr. Dean had told him of demands for hush money

during that conversation. A week later he amended his statement and said that Mr. Dean had only "alleged" demands for hush money.

Senator Baker said that the whole country should be allowed to hear the March 21 tape recordings. The country as a whole, he said, is the "sovereign" that eventually will make a permanent judgment on the President's case.

Finally, Mr. Baker disputed President Nixon's assertion that one year of Watergate was enough and that the country is "wallowing" in the Watergate scandal.

"I've always felt," he said, "that once the issue was joined, we had to follow it to its conclusion, and I regret that it's taken so long, but it has."

Senator Baker declined to discuss the contents of a report he prepared for the Senate Watergate committee on possible involvement of the Central Intelligence Agency in the Watergate cover-up.