

# Lengthy Ford Probe Seen

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The House Judiciary Committee's investigation of vice presidential nominee Gerald R. Ford could take a month or more, Chairman Peter Rodino (D-N.J.) indicated yesterday.

Rodino said he has been told it will take two to three weeks for the FBI to complete its investigation of Ford's background. Committee hearings can't begin until the FBI report is received, and will last longer than a week, Rodino predicted.

The word from both Rodino and Speaker Carl Albert continued to be that the House will conduct an "expeditious but thorough" investigation of Ford, who is the Minority Leader of the House and has been a congressman for 25 years.

Albert and Rodino stressed both these words at a Demo-

cratic caucus yesterday where some members urged delay on confirming Ford until President Nixon produces the tapes of conversations requested by the Senate Watergate committee and Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox.

To succeed Ford as minority leader, virtually all of a score of House Republicans interviewed yesterday felt that Rep. John J. Rhodes (R-Ariz.) has sewed up the race. His quick campaign opened before Ford was officially nominated for Vice President.

But Rep. Leslie C. Arends (R-Ill.), 78, party whip for 30 years, remains an announced candidate, and Illinois Republicans agreed to support him as long as he is a candidate.

There was speculation that Arends was staying in the race temporarily for some kind of

bargaining leverage with Rhodes and would bow out before the Republicans caucus on the question. Some said Arends says he deserves election after 30 years in second place. But the overwhelming view was that the party will not elect a 78-year-old leader.