

McCloskey to Ask House To Consider Impeachment

Washington

Representative Paul N. McCloskey Jr. announced yesterday that he would ask the House of Representatives to consider whether President Nixon should be impeached for "obstruction of justice."

The California congressman, an unsuccessful candidate in Republican primaries last year, raised the impeachment issue in a carefully worded letter made public yesterday.

He did not commit himself to launching formal impeachment action but notified colleagues in the letter that he had reserved one hour for a "full discussion" Wednesday on the House floor of "serious questions" raised by President Nixon's 4000-word statement issued May 22 on the Watergate conspiracy.

Other members of Congress have talked privately, and a few have mentioned in public, the possibility of undertaking a formal inquiry into possible impeachment of Mr. Nixon.

House Democratic leaders have deferred such action, calling it "premature."

FIRST

If McCloskey carries out his announced plan he will be the first to raise the issue on the floor of the House for full consideration.

His letter said he intends to discuss "the special constitutional responsibilities of the House with respect to investigation of the matters revealed in President Nixon's public statement of May 22."

In the May 22 statement Mr. Nixon acknowledged he had asked H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, two senior White House aides who have resigned, "to ensure" last year that activities of a secret White House investigative unit would not be uncovered by the government's investigation of the 1972 break-in at the Democratic party's

headquarters in the Watergate complex.

Mr. Nixon said in the statement that he had set up the White House unit to try to plug leaks of information related to national security and that he had been unaware at the time of any illegal activities.

CHARGE

McCloskey's letter said that the White House investigative unit, known as "the plumbers," had included the individuals who broke into the Watergate offices and who earlier had burglarized the office a Beverly Hills psychiatrist who was treating Daniel Ellsberg.

"Both of these activities were criminal in nature," McCloskey said.

"To take steps 'to ensure' that criminal activities not be exposed, under ordinary rules of criminal law, is to obstruct justice, a felony," McCloskey stated.

CONSTITUTION

He also said in the letter that the President "is entitled to the presumption of innocence" but added that "the facts thus far known would seem to indicate the need for a careful and impartial inquiry by the only body in our system of government which is assigned that responsibility for initiating action to remedy execu-

utive and judicial misconduct."

McCloskey was referring to the provision in the Constitution which gives the House of Representatives the sole authority to decide — by majority vote —

whether to impeach a federal official. If an official is impeached by the House, the Senate conducts a trial to determine if the official should be removed from office. Two-thirds of the senators must vote for the re-

moval.

House members have made plain their almost uniform reluctance to discuss impeachment openly unless there is overwhelming evidence of wrong doing by the President. The discussion

planned by McCloskey could provide the first public indication of how widespread the support is in the House for opening an inquiry that could lead ultimately to an impeachment vote.

N.Y. Times Service