

ZIEGLER PRESSES PANEL FOR ACTION

MAR 26 1974

Suggests Committee Staff Perhaps Work Late on Impeachment Inquiry

NYTimes

By SEYMOUR M. HERSH

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 25—

The White House escalated its criticism of the House Judiciary Committee today, suggesting that its staff "should perhaps work late into the evening" to complete quickly a preliminary assessment of the impeachment evidence against President Nixon.

Ronald L. Ziegler, the Presidential press secretary, told newsmen that "we feel that they should move within a matter of weeks" to complete that assessment. After that step, he said, White House attorneys will then "stand ready to hold cooperative discussions" about the further turnover of documents and tapes.

During a 45-minute briefing, Mr. Ziegler continued what amounts to a public assault on the committee by repeatedly suggesting that it was being irresponsible in demanding more Presidential data before completing its analysis of the documents provided earlier this month.

In Houston last week, President Nixon said that the committee's request for material was "virtually a hunting license or fishing license." He urged that further requests be made after the committee had narrowed the scope of its inquiry and determined the relevancy of each demand.

Mr. Nixon's criticisms were

Continued on Page 27, Column 1

Continued From Page 1, Col. 5

assailed by House Speaker Carl Albert in a television interview taped for broadcast tonight. Mr. Albert, a Democrat, characterized one of the President's assertions about the committee's intentions—his figure of speech suggesting that the committee sought to fill a rented U-Haul trailer with White House documents—as "a wild defensive maneuver and almost beneath the dignity of the office of the President of the United States."

"It is damaging the atmosphere in which he operates in the House," he said in the Public Broadcasting Service interview. "I think the President would be well advised to cooperate, because there's nothing

that can be done when one of the big issues is cover-up."

Judgment on Action

Earlier today, Mr. Albert rejected a request that he seek equal television and radio time on behalf of the House committee to refute Mr. Nixon's allegations. In a letter to Representative John Conyers Jr., Democrat of Michigan, who is a member of the Judiciary Committee, he said that he was also disturbed "by any staged or contrived effort to create the impression that the committee is not acting responsibly or properly."

Nonetheless, he is turning down the request, Mr. Albert said, because "I am convinced that history will judge the House by what it does, not by what the President and his spokesman say."

During his briefing today Mr. Ziegler repeatedly stressed that the White House had not "refused" to hand over the additional tapes and documents that have been sought by the committee since Feb. 25.

"If the White House said we don't want to do anything, if we flatly said no," he asserted, "then that position would be a difficult matter to deal with."

"That is not our position. We stand ready to cooperate," after the Judiciary Committee completes its review of the materials on hand narrows the focus of its inquiry.

In suggesting that the panel could complete its work within two weeks—an assertion made after he caustically noted that "they have enough lawyers"—Mr. Ziegler left the impression

re mark that the staff should work into the evenings, responded with a laugh.

"Well," he said, "you know that John Doar [the committee's counsel] is a demon for work."

The aide said that the staff of 42 lawyers and clerks was working weekends and nights to categorize and index the White House material that began arriving March 8. That material, consisting of 19 tapes and hundreds of documents, has also been provided to the Watergate prosecutor's office.

The committee spokesman noted that the White House had

that the committee was seeking "to drag these proceedings out."

Calls Subpoena Routine

Asked to reconcile the White House demand that the Judiciary Committee speed up its work with its request—an announced today—that the special Watergate prosecutor wait four more days before pressing its subpoena for more material, Mr. Ziegler responded that they were different issues. The subpoena, he added, is "relatively routine in nature."

A spokesman for the committee, told of Mr. Ziegler's

been "sending the stuff in dribs and drabs," with the last batch of material arriving Friday.

Doesn't Want Contest

"We haven't completed our work yet," he said, "but I don't want to get into a contest about it."

At the news briefing, Mr. Ziegler indicated that President Nixon would continue to speak out in public on Watergate and other issues, with an address to a Republican meeting tentatively scheduled for Wednesday night.

The press aide characterized the reaction from Mr. Nixon's addresses in Houston and Chicago as "extremely good."

"As far as we can tell," he said, "he has been received very favorably by the American people."

The White House portrayed Mr. Nixon as being intensely involved with Presidential activities today, announcing that he had met with Vice President Ford and a number of Congressional leaders. In addition, he said, the President "reviewed" cables from Bonn and Moscow filed by Secretary of State Kissinger and spent part of the morning "writing return messages."

MAR 26 1974