

HOUSE UNIT PLANS

NEW BID TO NIXON

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Panel Prepares Request for Evidence Amid Signs He May Yield Some Tapes

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WASHINGTON, April 2—The House Judiciary Committee prepared today to issue a new request to the White House for evidence for its impeachment inquiry amid indications that President Nixon would comply with an earlier demand for Watergate tape recordings.

The committee chairman, Peter W. Rodino Jr., Democrat of New Jersey, said that additional evidence would be sought whether or not Mr. Nixon agreed to supply tapes of 42 Watergate-related conversations the committee asked for on Feb. 25.

But Mr. Rodino said that he was optimistic about resolving an impasse over the Feb. 25 request, and one of the committee's senior lawyers said that "some progress" had been made at a meeting today with White House lawyers.

"We see some daylight," Albert E. Jenner Jr., the committee's senior Republican counsel, told newsmen after he and John M. Doar, director of the impeachment staff, met with James D. St. Clair, Mr. Nixon's special counsel.

It appeared, however, that any understanding reached among the lawyers on the Feb. 25 request was still subject to approval or rejection by the President.

Mr. Jenner said, "There has been some progress, the result of which should show up in a couple of days."

Mr. Rodino said he had no firm information that would lead him to conclude that the President would cooperate with the committee and added that his optimism was instead based on the continuation of the conversations among the lawyers.

"I want to believe they want to cooperate," he said of the White House.

Meantime, both Vice President Ford and the special Watergate prosecutor Leon Jaworski pressed the White House to make materials available to investigators.

Mr. Ford told a group of reporters at a luncheon that he disagreed with Democratic leaders in Congress who had said that the House was inclined to impeach Mr. Nixon. But Mr. Ford added that "You could get a solidification of votes in the House" if the President

defied the Judiciary Committee. The Vice President said that he did not know the contents of the tapes being withheld from the committee but he asserted that if they contained "relevant" information they "ought to be made available." A spokesman for Mr. Jaworski issued a statement noting that a number of the special prosecutor's requests for White House material were still "outstanding." The statement said that subpoenas would be issued for the evidence "if there is noncompliance" with the requests.

New Requests Pending

Neither Mr. Rodino nor other representatives of the Judiciary Committee would disclose today the nature of the material the President will be asked to supply. There was speculation on Capitol Hill, however, that the request would deal with allegations that milk producer groups had made contributions to Mr. Nixon's 1972 re-election campaign in exchange for a 1971 decision to raise Government support levels for milk prices.

Mr. Rodino said in an interview that the new request would not be the last from the committee to the White House.

The committee's investigators have reportedly identified a number of documents and recordings that they wish to obtain from the White House. Committee officials were said to be undecided whether to seek all the material at one time or to ask for only part of it now and additional evidence later.

Mr. Rodino's comment appeared to signal a decision to ask for only part of the evidence before the committee leaves Washington next week for a 10-day Easter vacation.

Senate Panel Criticized

Sources close to the Congressional inquiry said that Mr. Rodino wanted to avoid any opportunity for the White House to accuse the committee of seeking an extravagantly large amount of material. The sources noted that the Senate Watergate committee was sharply criticized last year for seeking some 500 documents and recordings in a single request.

Mr. Rodino said that the new request would be among items on the agenda at a committee meeting Thursday for a progress report on the investigation. The committee will also discuss legal briefs prepared by its staff and by White House lawyers on the role that the President's defense attorneys should be permitted to play in the inquiry.

The unusual statement from the special prosecutor's office followed an exchange at the White House between Gerald R. Warren, the deputy White

House press secretary, and newsmen.

Mr. Warren said it was his understanding that the President had turned over "all relevant materials" sought by Mr. Jaworski in a subpoena issued March 15. United Press International, a news service, suggested in a mid-day account, however, that the White House spokesman was conveying the impression that all the special prosecutor's requests for information had been honored.

Requests to Continue

Mr. Jaworski's office then issued a statement saying that the wire service account was "incorrect." More significant, the statement added, "We have made and will make requests for materials whenever we have sufficient cause to believe that they are relevant to the various investigations that fall under our mandate and which include a number of areas other than Watergate."

"A number of such requests are outstanding," it said. "If there is noncompliance subpoenas will be issued in accordance with the agreement between the President and the special prosecutor that such matters should be submitted to the court."