

FORD SEEKS A PACT ON SECRET PAPERS

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Meets With House Leaders in Bid to Resolve Dispute With Intelligence Panel

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 26 — President Ford, seeking to avert a threatened citation for contempt of Congress, met today with House leaders to try to resolve a dispute over Congressional access to intelligence information.

But the chairman of the House Select Committee on Intelligence, Representative Otis G. Pike, Democrat of Suffolk, said Mr. Ford and Congressional leaders were "a long way from an agreement."

Ron Nessen, the White House press secretary, said the President considered the 99-minute meeting with bipartisan leaders of both the House and the committee to have been "most constructive and useful."

Representative Robert McClory of Illinois, the ranking Republican on the committee, said that he also was "encouraged we will be able to agree to procedures" enabling the panel to obtain classified documents and testimony the Administration had refused to supply.

Last-Ditch Effort

The hastily arranged meeting at the White House was requested by Mr. McClory yesterday in a last-ditch effort to head off a constitutional confrontation.

Mr. McClory sought some form of compromise after Mr. Pike said he would initiate contempt of Congress proceedings against the President or officials of the Administration if they continued to "obstruct and delay" the House intelligence inquiry.

Mr. Pike's threat followed the refusal by the State Department to let middle-level officials appear before the panel to answer questions on purported policy lapses and intelligence failures involving Cyprus, Portugal, the Middle East and Indochina.

Earlier, Mr. Pike and members of the committee had objected when the President barred disclosure of additional classi-

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fied documents to the committee on the ground that its members had acted improperly in making public some contents of intelligence data on the 1973 Middle East war.

Committee members contended unanimously that they had a constitutional right to decide what classified information they could publish, but they offered to give the Administration notice and an opportunity to argue against a specific disclosure before it was made.

Mr. Nessen said that additional meetings of White House and committee staffs would be held to seek agreement on "ways that information might be made available to the committee and to the public."

Although Representative John J. Rhodes of Arizona, the House minority leader, also expressed confidence that the impasse would be resolved, Mr. Pike told reporters that he remained prepared to consider asking the full House, if necessary, to support the panel's insistence on

obtaining the information it needs.

Attending the meeting, besides the President and Representatives Pike, McClory and Rhodes, were Representative Carl Albert of Oklahoma, the House Speaker; Secretary of State Kissinger; Donald Rumsfeld, the White House chief of staff; Philip W. Buchen, the White House legal counsel, and John O. Marsh Jr., counselor to the President.

'Revision' Likely

According to Mr. McClory, Secretary Kissinger "indicated there would be a revision of what appeared to be rather rigid guidelines" covering testimony by State Department employees before the panel.

State Department officials told the committee yesterday that departmental witnesses would refuse to discuss classified material during their testimony.

Mr. Rhodes said in an interview late today that Mr. Kissinger "made it clear he wasn't trying to hide anything," but was attempting to protect career officers in the department from inquiry into their policy recommendations.

"I got the impression," Mr. Rhodes added, that Secretary Kissinger would permit wiffied material, that lower-ranking officials would discuss factual data but not policy decisions and that the witnesses must have legal counsel neesses "to answer almost any question except, 'What did you recommend?'"

Mr. Marsh and A. Searle Field, the committee's chief counsel, reportedly met at length today in an attempt to devise guidelines for handling classified material that both sides could accept. Mr. McClory said he hoped they could agree on a draft that would be presented at a committee meeting next Monday.

If Mr. Ford or another Administration official was cited by a formal vote of the House for contempt of Congress, the House sergeant-at-arms would be empowered, in theory, to arrest the offending official and confine him in the Capitol until the contempt was purged. In fact, however, the issue would probably be resolved in court.

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