

Hill Vows Thorough Probe of Successor

By Richard L. Lyons
and Spencer Rich

Washington Post Staff Writers

Congressional leaders yesterday promised a thoroughgoing investigation of whomever President Nixon nominates as Vice President. But how they would proceed was still up in the air, with a tug of war in the Senate over which committee would have jurisdiction.

Nearly three-fourths of the Republican members of each house accepted President Nixon's invitation to submit their recommendations for the nomination. House Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford (R-Mich.) was high on the list of most House Republicans. New York Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller drew support from

both liberals and conservatives. A score of other names were thrown in.

The only negative campaign that surfaced was against John B. Connally, the Texas Democrat-turned-Republican, who was denounced by some House Democrats as a "double-crosser" and who Republicans conceded would have a tough job winning confirmation from a Democratic-controlled Congress.

Speaker Carl Albert (D-Okla.) told reporters at noon that he and Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) were agreed that each house would act separately on the nominee, who must by law be approved by a majority vote of each house.

Albert said he would refer the nomination to the House Judiciary Committee, whose chairman, Rep. Peter Rodino (D-N.J.), promised "the most searching kind of inquiry" that could last for weeks. Rodino would not rule out the possibility that the investigation might continue through the end of the year.

In the Senate there is a struggle between the Rules Committee, which Mansfield said has jurisdiction under the rules, and others who want either to create a select committee to consider the nomination or give the Judiciary Committee a piece of the action along with the Rules Committee.

A bipartisan Senate meeting of leaders and members

of the committees involved produced no agreement except that most of those present wanted to hold joint hearings with the House. This would avoid the necessity for the nominee to go through two possibly lengthy hearings.

Mansfield said he reported this to Albert, who seemed personally approving but said he would have to discuss it with other House members and would give Mansfield an answer this morning. But it seemed unlikely that House members would want to be part of a joint investigation, both because they prefer to do their own work and because they would be pushed out of

See HILL, A15, Col. 7

HILL, From A1

the limelight by better-known senators.

Senate Democrats and Republicans are to hold party caucuses of all members this morning to try to decide who among them will consider the nomination. They reportedly will be asked to choose from between the three proposals of giving it to the Rules Committee, forming a committee of members from Rules and Judiciary or creating a select committee from the Senate at large.

Rodino, assuming his House Judiciary Committee will consider the nomination on its own, said an exhaustive inquiry is needed because "in the light of recent experience . . . the country is in a state of tension and faith in government must be restored."

Rodino said there is no need to act in haste because "the line of succession is already established." Under the law, Albert would become President if the presidency should become vacant.

Mansfield added that, "I think we should take some time."

Rep. Benjamin S. Rosenthal (D-N.Y.) said the confirmation will be "the most exhaustive of any individual in the history of the United States. Each member must certify his approval of the nominee to be the next President of the United States."

House Majority Leader Thomas P. O'Neill (D-Mass.) said that at a meeting of House Democratic regional whips yesterday morning there was "adamant" opposition to Connally as a "double-crosser and traitor" to the Democratic Party which made him governor of Texas and Secretary of the Navy. O'Neill said the whips, who are a cross-section of the party, felt Connally "should not be confirmed by a Democratic Congress."

O'Neill said Democrats are divided on the question of whether a nominee

should be opposed if he appeared a potential Republican presidential nominee in 1976. O'Neill said that factor "would be a consideration" with him.

And the chief House Democratic whip, Rep. John McFall (D-Calif.), said he would vote against Connally as well as Sen. Charles Percy (R-Ill.), California Gov. Ronald Reagan or Rockefeller on that ground alone.

But Albert, top Democratic leader in the House, refused to rule anyone out.

"I don't want to place any inhibitions on the President or the House," Albert told reporters. "We need someone around whom the country could rally, who has the confidence of Congress and can work with the President."

Albert said he wasn't injecting himself into the selection process in any way, but added that he had told President Nixon at the White House Wednesday that "we have a man in the House" who could win confirmation without difficulty. This was a reference to Ford, who most House members agreed could win House approval without a vote cast against him.

At a House Republican conference yesterday where Ford extended the President's invitation to submit recommendations, Rep. Silvio Conte (R-Mass.), a liberal, drew applause when he announced that he had already written to the President urging Ford's nomination. Rep. John Rhodes (R-Ariz.) put Ford second on his list after Sen. Barry Goldwater, a fellow Arizonan.

Rep. Peter Peyser (R-N.Y.) urged members to recommend Rockefeller. Peyser said the governor had assured him yesterday morning that he was available.

Conte said one member at the party meeting suggested that the invitation for names was a "charade," that the President had already made his choice. "I would have if I were in his place," Rep. Albert Quie (R-Minn.) told a reporter.