

Congress Starting Its Ford Probe

Washington

President Nixon's choice of Representative Gerald R. Ford appeared last night to have ended the Senate battle over the procedures for approving the new Vice President.

"I think it will be in the Rules Committee before noon tomorrow," said Senator Birch E. Bayh (Dem.-Ind.), one of the Senate Democrats who had called for creation of a special committee or expansion of the existing rules panel.

Several Rules Committee members said the panel will conduct extensive hearings, even though Ford is a well-known and well-liked figure in Congress.

"We intend to go into his

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financial background, to make sure there are no conflicts of interest," said Chairman Howard Cannon (Dem.-Nev.), although he added: "I am sure he will have less difficulty than many others whose names I heard bandied about today."

Earlier, as senators wrangled over procedures for the unprecedented nomination, Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield called on the Rules Committee to launch its inquiry and said he hopes it can act by the end of October.

Cannon said the committee will meet this morning and disclosed he has already been in touch with the FBI on an investigation of the nominee. He added that he hopes the schedule set by Mansfield can be met.

Mansfield said he hopes the committee's hearings will "not be an extravaganza of any kind."

The House, meanwhile, rejected a plan for joint hearings, meaning each house will consider the nomination separately.

House leaders quickly decided that the rules require its Judiciary Committee, chaired by Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr. (Dem.-N.J.) to conduct hearings and consider the nomination.

That panel's opposition to joint hearings with the Senate was a major factor in the refusal of the House leadership to accept the proposal for joint hearings, tendered by Senate leaders Thursday.

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