

Albert presses for inquiry first

—From Page 1

Examiner News Services.

WASHINGTON — Speaker Carl Albert sought today to head off demands by some House Democrats for the start of impeachment hearings against President Nixon. He is expected to suggest instead a broad inquiry into whether there are grounds for such hearings.

Albert prepared to put the inquiry approach before the 23-member Democratic Steering Committee for approval. Rep. Peter Rodino (D-N.J.), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, is expected to announce that his panel is prepared to start such an inquiry.

Meanwhile, an Associated Press sampling of sentiment in the House showed that 48 members — most of them Democrats — are willing at least to consider impeachment proceedings.

The Albert plan, if backed by a majority of Democrats, would blunt a move by Rep. Jerome Waldie, (D-Calif.), for impeachment hearings, based on a resolution Waldie planned to introduce today.

The Waldie measure would impeach Nixon on the ground of obstruction of justice, based mainly on the firing of Special Prosecutor

Archibald Cox and Nixon's refusal to allow full access to tape recordings sought by Cox and the Senate Watergate investigating committee.

Impeachment by the House is, in effect, an indictment. The Senate then acts as the jury.

House Republican leaders planned their own meeting today to plot strategy and seek consensus on Nixon's action in firing Cox.

Some House members, such as Rep. John Moss, (D-Calif.), had proposed earlier that Albert appoint a select committee to investigate whether there are grounds for impeachment.

Moss said he wanted to discuss this approach at the steering committee meeting, but will meanwhile introduce a bill to create an independent office to continue the investigative work that Cox started.

Albert is reported hopeful that the House approach will be a middle course, not going as far as some Democrats want but going further than some Republicans advise.

The plan reportedly was
—See Back Page, Col. 5

agreed on at a meeting of the Democratic leadership yesterday.

Rodino apparently agreed to the plan without first polling his own committee. A UPI survey showed that at least a majority of the 37 committee members favor impeachment hearings rather than a broad inquiry, but that was before the leadership apparently settled on the inquiry route.

The committee already had made a scholarly study of impeachment procedures and precedents, and it was busy investigating the background of Rep. Gerald R. Ford (R-Mich.) the House Republican leader named by Nixon to be vice president.

The Rodino panel had hoped to start hearings on the Ford nomination within the next two weeks, but the impeachment drive has muddied that issue. Albert reportedly wants the Ford hearings and impeachment inquiry to go on at the same time without a purposeful delay on the nomination. Until Ford is confirmed, Albert remains in line to succeed Nixon if he is impeached, resigns or dies.

But two committee members, Waldie and Rep. Don Edwards (D-Calif.) said the impeachment question should first be settled.

"It would be absurd to confirm Gerald Ford and then impeach the source of his nomination," he said.

United Auto Workers president Leonard Woodcock and the AFL-CIO Executive Council yesterday both called on Nixon to resign or be impeached. Sen. Daniel K. Inouye (D-Hawaii) a member of the Watergate committee, also called for the President's resignation.